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Perceived Reliable Sources of Reading Instruction Information Selected by Kindergarten, First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth Grade Teacher-Practitioners

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PERCEIVED RELIABLE SOURCES OF READING INSTRUCTION INFORMATION SELECTED BY KINDERGARTEN, FIRST, SECOND, THIRD, FOURTH, AND FIFTH GRADE TEACHER-PRACITIONERS

by

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ABSTRACT

PERCEIVED RELIABLE SOURCES OF READING INSTRUCTION INFORMATION SELECTED BY KINDERGARTEN, FIRST, SECOND, THIRD, FOURTH, AND FIFTH GRADE TEACHER-PRACTITIONERS

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The teacher is considered the most important factor in student success. With increased emphasis on research-based information through federal legislation, teachers struggle selecting credible methods and procedures among available reading instruction sources confounding the possibility of student achievement. Teacher self-knowledge, peer teachers, administrators, professional development, and the Internet are accessible sources for educators in regard to obtaining reading instruction information. Research in the field of education suggests teacher-practitioners procure and implement retrieved reading instruction information based on two factors: existing teacher beliefs regarding reading instruction and support of implementation of the method or practice within the school climate. This study investigated through quantitative and qualitative analyses if there is a significant difference in perceived reliable sources of reading instruction information among teacher-practitioners based on years of experience and grade level designation as supported by questionnaire comments and interview responses.

A 3 X 3 Factorial Multivariate of Analysis (MANOVA) reported no significant interaction in perceived reliable sources (peer teacher, professional

development, the Internet, and school administrators) based on years of experience (0 – 8 years, 9 – 18 years, and 19 + years) and grade level designations (Kindergarten-First, Second-Third, and Fourth-Fifth). A main effect was reported for *years*, and a univariate follow-up for *Internet*. The finding of the main effect reported a difference in perceived reliability of the Internet for reading instruction for teacher-practitioners of 0 – 8 years of experience and 19 + years of experience. Teacher-practitioners with 19 + years of experience perceive the reliability of the Internet greater than teacher-practitioner with 0 – 8 years of experience. No significant difference was reported for teacher-practitioners with 9 – 18 years of experience regarding the perceived reliability of the Internet.

Qualitative findings support the quantitative outcome through comments provided on the questionnaire and interview statements. The use and availability of the Internet was reported in all interviews. The quantitative and qualitative findings of this study suggest the influx of the Internet has changed the perspectives of traditional approaches to how instructional information should be disseminated, and presents findings questioning whether other available sources investigated are presently effective in providing reading instruction knowledge in an effort to bridge teacher-practitioners acquisition of reading knowledge to implementation application. Suggestions regarding policy, practice, and further research directions of assisting teacher-practitioners and higher education with investigations for reading instruction through the Internet are presented.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research in part to my children, Parker and Royce, for their inspiration in my life in becoming an impassioned educator.

I dedicate this research in part to my grandmothers, Minnie Mae Davis and Elise Biglane, and mother, Doris Davis-Biglane for inspiring creativity, determination, and independence.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

2 – 3	Second and Third Grades
4 – 5	Fourth and Fifth Grades
CEU's	Continued Education Units
DIBELS	Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills
ELL	English as Language Learners
ESEA	The Elementary and Secondary Education Act
GAO	Government Accountability Office
I	Internet
K – 1	Kindergarten and First Grades
NCIS	National Center for Education Statistics
NCLB	No Child Left Behind Act
NCTE	National Council of Teachers of English
MANOVA	Multivariate Analysis of Variance
OBQ	Organizational Belief Questionnaire
PD	Professional Development
PT	Peer Teacher
SA	School Administrators
SASS	School and Staffing Survey
SCANS	The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills
USDE	United States Department of Education
WHO	World Health Organization

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The field of teacher education is often perceived as a substandard profession in relation to other occupations (e.g., medical field and legal field) in regard to illiteracy, mediocrity, and incompetence of American students (Zumwalt, 1986). Many political opportunists, researchers, and a few within the education community indicate cogent reasons exist as to why teachers have yet to arrive at the professional pinnacle. Rationales espoused for the implication include lackadaisical format of teacher training through professional development, mediocre policing guidelines, and deficiencies in conformity to policies.

States, through the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, presently require teacher-practitioners expand instructor knowledge for highly qualified status and continued licensure requirements; however, license restrictions considered necessary for updating teacher knowledge endow broad and sweeping terms of what is acceptable (USDE, 2002). Continued education units (CEU's), conferences, local and state provided professional development, and Internet-based coursework provide a plethora of opportunities and formats for teacher-practitioners' credential updates; unfortunately, absence of evaluative procedures following offered continued education results in inconsistency of teacher uniformity of professional content.

Historically, many believe individuals have selected teacher education as a profession for a variety of reasons other than to educate: avoidance of summer work, short work hours, and disinterest of continued knowledge advancement

through professional development as required by other professions (Jarolimek & Foster, 1989). Presently, the majority of preservice teachers do not elect to pursue the education profession based on the aforementioned reasons; however, many teacher candidates believe the profession encapsulates an effortless occupation.

Although the education profession is occasionally portrayed to the public as remise, the teacher makes the difference between achievement and failure in any classroom. The single most important instructional force in the classroom is the teacher (Berry, Hoke, & Hirsch, 2004; Bond & Dykstra, 1967; Gorton & Schneider, 1991; Stinnett & Huggett, 1956). According to the *U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Handbook,* teachers' responsibilities entail (a) planning, instructing, evaluating, and assigning instructional lessons, (b) assessing and evaluating student progress and effectiveness of learned material, and (c) creating, directing, and monitoring classroom management (2008). In addition to assuring curriculum requirements are taught and students' acquisition of stipulated course of study objectives are achieved, teachers are responsible for knowledge appropriateness in regard to *how* information is presented (Shepherd & Ragan, 1992). The United States Department of Education presently categorizes instructors as *highly qualified teachers* using three criteria which includes (a) procuring the minimum of a bachelor's degree in the subject matter, (b) attaining state teacher certification, and (c) exhibiting knowledge in subjects taught (2006). As necessary and intricate as the teacher is to the success of all students in the classroom, many programs and approaches to instruction fail to consider research investigating

educators' excogitation of the practice of advancements in knowledge of the reading process (Haggar & McIntyre, 2000).

The concept of teacher pedagogy is frequently investigated, debated, and categorized by research-educators; however, teacher beliefs about instruction can be ascertained through deductive observation of practice (Harste & Burke,1977). Two categories of teacher-pedagogy investigations emerge in the literature: evolving and predetermined. *Evolving* connotes an *open-mind* approach in which teachers' assumptions regarding student learning develop throughout both preservice candidates' and teacher-practitioners' experiences, including post-graduate study. Teachers embracing a *predetermined* pedagogy have existing procedures and outcomes in which the procedure dictates the instruction. Alternatively, Kagan describes a combination of both evolving and predetermined teacher-types in which instructional beliefs and practices leading to decision-making and implementation develop throughout a teacher's career (1992). Teacher-experience through reflection and investigation of student assessments and evaluations attribute to pedagogical molding. Theories develop from learner beliefs within an experience threshold leading to broader understandings of instructional alternatives.

In contrast to evolving pedagogy are Pajares' critical analyses Investigating preservice educators regarding predetermined ideas of learner beliefs (1992). Results from studies investigating preservice teachers' developing philosophy of education infer classroom experiences only substantiate a teacher's pre-held theory regarding student learning (Pajares, 1992). Intertwined with teacher efficacy within the school community, Pajares'

studies are aligned with predetermined pedagogy in which amplification of instruction develops from exiting beliefs. Whether or not teachers adopt an instructional practice, or modify learning theories, is filtered through subject matter knowledge, perceptions about effective instruction, pedagogical beliefs, and teaching style (Coburn & Talbert, 2006; Denton, Vaughn, & Fletcher, 2003).

Designing appropriate reading instruction procedures for students' needs become open-debated issues among politicians, the public, school districts, and teacher preserivce education. Acquiring credible knowledge regarding effective reading instruction has been a daunting task for most teachers. Theories debated among experts, instructional trends, and political and public opinion appear to have interfered with teachers' developing knowledge of the reading process through classroom investigations (Ballantine, 1993). Determining what reading instruction approach is utilized by any teacher is dependent on how well the information is received, understood, supported within the school, and cohesiveness within existing instructional beliefs (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985; Caine & Caine, 1994; Davis, 1999; Denton et al., 2003; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2001; Gennaoui & Kretschmer, 1996; Greenwood & Maheady, 2001; Hamilton & Richardson, 1995; Shanahan & Barr, 1995; Vaughn & Dammann, 2001).

Choice is an important catalyst for change with teachers. Permanent change is an individual's belief investment bought into only through certainty of a beneficial outcome (Gennaoui & Kretschmer, 1996). Gennaoui and Kretschmer allege when teachers lack ownership and purpose toward topics designed to improve and change, concern for success is lost. *What Work Requires of*

Schools: A SCANS Report for America 2000 reported schools, through either adoption of culture or acceptance of practice, view the skills the business world requires as undefined and unclear in the expectations of abilities all students should possess (USDE, 1991). The purposes of formal education are not held as constant, precise goals educators are to achieve; therefore, decisions made by forces outside the classroom have been ineffective regarding changing teacher practices or beliefs (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2001).

Statement of the Problem

Teachers are the planners and deliverers for school-based reading instruction. In order to teach reading effectively, educators often seek sources aligned with existing theoretical and philosophical beliefs regarding reading instruction (Coburn & Talbert, 2006; Denton et al., 2003). What teachers believe about and practice in regard to reading instruction and what trends and legislation ask teachers to teach are frequently conflictive. Teachers are generally left without approachable, credible sources of information on how to accommodate and assimilate new information and legislation regarding reading instruction. Unless teachers are offered and pursue credible, professional, and reliable sources of information, acquiring evolving knowledge and expertise regarding the reading processes will continue to become elusive and frustrating to educators.

Research Question

This study will investigate if there is a statistically significant difference in perceived reliable sources of reading instruction information among teacher-practitioners based on years of instructional experience and grade level

designation. Questionnaire responses will determine each teacher-practitioner's grade designation group into one of three levels (i.e., Kindergarten-First, Second-Third, and Fourth-Fifth) and one of three levels of years of teaching experience (i.e., 0 - 8 years, 9 - 18 years, and 19+ years). Vignettes poised to participants will investigate sources of reading instruction knowledge (i.e., peer teachers, professional development, the Internet, and school administrators) presented through teacher procedures (i.e., planning, instructing, and assessing).

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of the study, the following terms are defined for content clarity:

Administrator: School-based principals and assistant principals.

Balanced Literacy Programs: Literacy instruction based on individual student needs utilizing appropriate and interesting, leveled reading materials focusing on writing and reading skills through the process of teacher pre-assessment (Reutzel & Cooter, 2000).

Diagnostic Teaching: Instruction designed to improve reader performance of problem readers through fluency and comprehension. Components of diagnostic teaching entail assessment, instruction, diagnostic hypothesis, diagnostic lesson, assessment of growth, evaluate, modify, and recycle (Walker, 1988).

Differentiated Instruction: A process-based instructional approach designed for maximum student achievement of varying student abilities within a single class (Hall, 2004).

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, Public Law 89-10: Federal school aid legislation assisting the educational disadvantage with federal funding, improvement of educational practices, and desegregation of funding.

Highly Qualified Teacher: According to the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), a highly qualified teacher has earned a bachelor's degree, qualified for state certification, and is knowledgeable in the subject matter presently teaching.

Internet: Knowledge gained about reading instruction through computer website access.

Legislation: Laws, initiatives, and decrees for reading instruction as mandated by state and federal education governing bodies.

Literacy Coach: A literacy coach establishes and implements a schoolwide literacy program for an elementary or secondary school for literacy program needs: assessments and evaluations of the program to be included: A tentative definition from the International Reading Association (Long, 2008).

Literature Selection: Reading material selected and implemented by the teacher for student literacy instruction.

No Child Left Behind, Public Law 107-110: Reauthorized and amended the ESEA of 1965 federal education legislation.

Other: A choice on the questionnaire for a teacher who has an alternate answer for highest educational degree obtained.

Pedagogy: The artistic and scientific qualities involved in teaching.

Peer Teachers: Other teachers regardless of school site location.

Professional Development: Local school meetings designed to impart knowledge regarding instruction and other affiliated staff information.

Professional Teachers' Conferences: Conferences designed for presenting information for teachers to use in reading instruction.

Public School: Scholastic institutions considered non-private, non-parochial, non-charter recipients of federal, academic monies.

Research-based Instruction: Evidence based instructional methods, procedures, or strategies in which replication is assured and student population setting is similar to current classroom situation (USDE, 2002).

Reading Instruction: Either automaticity of reading action without thought (e.g., recognizing words), or a plan that can be adjusted to fit the situation (e.g., making reading predictions [Duffy et al., 2003] and prior knowledge before reading).

Reading Instruction Knowledge: Reading information retrieved by teachers to contribute to, or refute, existing knowledge of literacy instruction through self-reflection and group settings.

Reading-based Program Initiative: Programs described by the state or local districts as being a current focus for reading instruction for all schools either within the state or school district.

School Climate: Attitudes, beliefs, and values shared by parents, students, teachers, and administrators about the school (Shepherd & Ragan, 1992).

Self: Knowledge gained by the teacher from preservice programs, conferences, reflection, reading curriculum guides or books, peer teachers, administrators, the Internet, and assessment and evaluation of students' needs.

Standardized Test Scores: Scores elicited using either norm-referenced or criterion-referenced tests comparing student results on core subject matter (e.g., *Stanford Achievement Test of Basic Skills*).

Teacher-practitioner: An individual presently teaching Kindergarten, First, Second, Third, Fourth, or Fifth grade in a school from the state selected for this study.

Vignette: Briefly described instructional scenarios for the purpose of this study.

Delimitations

This study is delimited by the following:

1. Only elementary teachers-practitioners in grades Kindergarten, First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth grade public schools will be solicited;
2. A state in the southeastern continental United States represents the geographic area of solicitation;
3. Teachers will be surveyed in the school year provided Institutional Review Board acceptance and experts' approval of content; and
4. Teachers will be given approximately three weeks, initially, to complete the questionnaire. Approximately five weeks will be allocated for questionnaire-return including time for response to mail-back postcards.

Assumptions

For the purpose of this study, the following assumptions are considered:

1. Participants are responding to hypothetical statements parallel to beliefs held regarding knowledge about the reading-process and reading instruction.

2. Individuals completing survey have teaching licensure including alternative or emergency.
3. Demographic information is completed accurately in its entirety.
4. Kindergarten, First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth grade elementary teacher-practitioners responding to the questionnaire will answer all statements.

Justification

The purpose of this study is to investigate what sources teacher-practitioners consider valuable when given hypothetical situations regarding planning, instructing, and assessing student achievement for reading instruction knowledge. Specifically, the frequency of selecting sources teachers consider best for reading instructional knowledge procedures will be analyzed according to participant years of teaching experience and grade level designation through a researcher- designed questionnaire. Follow-up interviews will be conducted to elaborate on data retrieved from questionnaire analyses.

Potential benefits of this investigation include, but are not limited to:

1. Revelation of sources of knowledge teacher-practitioners consider valuable when planning for reading instruction assisting researchers in elucidating information to better assist acquisition and, ultimately, implementation.
2. Investigating differences of source selection for reading instruction knowledge among teacher-practitioners of varied years of teaching experience (i.e., 0 - 8, 9 - 18, and 19 + years) and grade level designation (i.e., Kindergarten-First, Second-Third, and Fourth-Fifth)

for the possibility of planning timely, effective opportunities to present research of best practices of reading instruction.

3. Teacher-practitioners' ability to acquire timely information for reading instruction assisting with student success; and more specifically, meeting the differentiated needs of student learners.
4. Teacher-practitioners' confidence in source selection of reading instruction knowledge assisting with student success; specifically, meeting the differentiated needs of student learners.

Information gleaned from this study will be beneficial to teachers, students, school districts, and researchers concerned with reliability issues involved in reading instruction knowledge. Additional possible outcomes are envisioned. Teachers will gain confidence in source selection of reading instruction knowledge allowing reduction in stress that frequently follows accountability with high-stakes testing as described in the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Office of Occupational Statistics and Employment Projections' *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (2008). Students will receive appropriate, differentiated reading instruction in a timely manner increasing confidence in ability and future literacy success. Researchers may aggregate outcomes of best practices and position beneficial information regarding effective reading procedures within the sources and time frame most beneficial for teachers. School districts will benefit from teachers receiving reading instruction knowledge pertinent to reading instruction from confidence-based sources leading to student success and increase in learning-confidence.

The United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) in a report to congressional requesters in September 2004 heralded the need for further investigation in research-based practices enveloped in the No Child Left Behind Act citing, “Currently, research on the effectiveness of different strategies to improve student performance is limited” (p.1). Additionally, “…it is difficult to project expenditures needed for meeting student proficiency provisions because there is insufficient research on what strategies will help all students reach academic proficiency” (p.6). The GAO elaborated on funding allocations by stating, “…NCLB requires that all federally funded instruction, technical assistance, and professional development activities be supported by scientifically based research. However, this type of research is limited in the education field” (p.11). To further elucidate the first quote from page one, the GAO added, “Currently, scientific research on the effectiveness of different strategies to improve student performance is limited” (p.40).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

"There can be but two real goals toward which we aim in teaching reading-or, more precisely, a single goal with two aspects: to teach children to read well and to love to read. For unless they learn to read well, children will not learn to read; and unless they love to read they will not read well" (Gates, 1951).

Research Dissemination

The dissemination of beneficial, credible, and timely information to teacher-practitioners regarding literacy knowledge is a continued focus for local, state, and federal educational governing agencies. According to the United States Department of Education in *Teacher Quality: A Report on the Preparation and Qualification of Public School Teachers (1999),* reveals a greater number of educators devote one to eight hours investigating a new instructional method through the training provided by professional development: 61% of the teacher-practitioners reported one to eight hours of professional development, and 39% allocated more than eight hours. When compared to the compartmentalized specific subject areas, however, more teacher-practitioners reported devoting more than eight hours to professional development in the subject area presently assigned: 44% devoted one to eight hours, and 56% allocated more than eight. The more subject-specific the professional development provided for teacher-practitioners, the more time educators allocated for instructional growth as stipulated by the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) for highly qualified teacher criteria. Whether or not the teacher-

practitioner through attending professional development opportunities in specific subject matter segued into observed implementation is not clear. Additionally, information regarding topics and quality of professional development through research-based initiatives was not revealed.

Research-Based Instruction

The process of teacher-practitioners evaluating research-based programs for literacy implementation in American classrooms where student diversity inevitably exists requires extensive investigation (Malouf & Schiller, 1995). Critical to child reading development is teacher knowledge of literacy acquisition (Burns, Griffin, & Snow, 1999). Early childhood professionals advocate curriculum and assessment based on best theory and research regarding children's developmental and learning needs (Bredekamp, Knuth, Kunesh, & Shulman, 1992). According to research-educators, failing to implement research-based, literacy practices deprives students needing more organized instructional approaches for the potential to achieve academically (Vaughn & Dammann, 2001). Implementation failure of research-based instructional practices is attributed to two overarching factors. The disbelief research-based practices are effective and necessary for all students is correlated to explaining teacher classroom decisions to limit implementation of practices presented as research-based. The lack of confidence in research-based instruction often segues into large gaps of time between research presentation and implementation-to-practice: ultimate rejection of the new method, procedure, or strategy on the part of the teacher follows (Greenwood & Abbott, 2001). A second relating factor is lack of exposure to

instructional practices and implementation procedures often resulting in teacher refusal to embrace research-based initiatives (Denton, Vaughn, & Fletcher, 2003). When teacher access to instructional materials is restricted by time, availability of sources of information, and quality-planning opportunities, the possibility of implementation decreases.

The term *research-based* has mediated from a scientific descriptor to a more broadening understanding of the term within the teacher population to accommodate the present legislative guidelines issued in the NCLB formal definition. Terminology to describe research-based as research-related as an *idea* rather than a *practice* evolved through teacher attempts of accretion, tuning, and restructuring of what research-based entails. The term *research-related* encapsulates qualitative attributes based more on teacher expertise rather than research experiments. The U.S. Department of Education issued a guidance Internet web-page to educators titled *A Toolkit for Teachers* emphasizing *scientifically- based research* (2004*)*. This new, but same, term for assessing instructional practices is defined as procedures that are rigorous, systematic, and objective in obtaining valid and reliable results. In a separate Internet release, the U.S. Department of Education in December 2003 reported the vast majority of instructional interventions only claim to improve educational outcomes supported by evidence; however, much of this evidence is advocacy-driven or poorly-designed. Mediums used to disseminate instructional intervention often include curricula, after-school programs, schoolwide reform programs, and new educational technologies. In an effort to assist teachers, principals, and curriculum coordinators in assessing if a program, curricula, or

technology represents credible research, a formula was offered to the education community from the U.S. Department of Education (2003) consisting of (a) the quality of the studies by randomization, and (b) the existence of two or more trials in the research representative of comparable school populations and settings. If quality and comparable settings criteria are met, the U.S. Department of Education (2003) will equate the research investigated as *strong evidence* for the method, procedure, or program to be considered as *scientifically-based* for teacher-practitioners to implement.

Reports regarding what research teachers should consider valid, credible, and appropriate inundate the education arena. Studies investigating plausible correlations between teaching practices and learning-to-read are continually qualified, quantified, and debated. For example, pre-emergent reading theories (e.g., reading to children, selecting predictable or rhyming books, print awareness, etc.) prior to formal schooling are well documented; however, the continued teacher practices enhancing student literacy knowledge for reading success in the early grades is less documented (Cunningham & Cunningham, 1992; Hart & Risely, 1995; Pikulski, 1994). Additionally, educational trends in legislation and research regarding specific importance of reading processes have evolved symptomatically confounding instructional possibilities teachers can choose among (Greenwood & Abbott, 2001). Michael Pressley (2003) advises educators, as part of teacher autonomy, should take into consideration twelve points regarding instructional experiments before dismissing, or committing, to implementation of practice: (a) experimentation cites cause-effect outcomes not possible within the confounds of other research methods, (b) replication of the

outcomes of the instructional experiment are not always beneficial for every teaching situation, (c) a few successful reading instruction practices are only occasionally offered minor experimental validation, (d) some instructional experiments can only be administered once due to cost, (e) published reading programs may not be solely based in total outcomes of true experiments, (f) comprehensive literacy programs often combine outcomes from numerous components while citing success based on a singular effect, (g) researchers are often professional experimenters rather than knowledgeable educators regarding instruction, (h) external validity connotes real-word credibility, and instructional experiments often fail in exact replication, (i) standardized tests do not reveal how the reading process is affected, just aggregation of measures, (j) before selecting a program based on an instructional experiment, the design should include similar target population, (k) occasionally, experimenters overstate the outcomes as being better than others, and (l) conclusions of instructional experiments change with culture and time. Teachers should use research as a window into possibilities; however, the decision to ultimately adopt a practice, or not, is the teacher's decision (Anderson et al., 1994; Chall, 1996). Experience conjoined with research affords teachers opportunities to advance literacy knowledge regarding learner beliefs, instructional beliefs, and student needs to influence academic achievement in a positive manner. Additionally, whether or not teachers adopt an instructional practice filters through subject matter knowledge, perceptions about effective instruction, pedagogical beliefs, and teaching style (Denton et al., 2003).

Classroom teachers are often reluctant to pursue research-based knowledge. Anderson indicates three obstacles exist for teachers in analyzing to implement research-based instructional practices (Anderson et al., 1994). Teachers' theoretical base may vary from the theoretical base of the research and researcher. This could be contributed to modification of practice inhibiting articulation of an exact *theory* or *practice*. Secondly, teachers' instructional concerns are different from researchers'. Proving one contributing achievement variable while providing a multitude of classroom environmental factors becomes time consuming, as well as a daunting task, for teachers. Finally, classroom methods, practices, and strategies are often expressed in a way teachers decontextualized the research to existing practice. According to researchers, it is dangerous to assume the conclusions of research apply to classroom settings: caution is the best approach until the outcomes of an experiment in the classroom setting can be examined and modified for encounters involving multiple overt and covert factors (Ruddell, Ruddell, & Singer, 1994). Research studies most often examine group effects rather than individual outcomes: Results from experiments are based in implicit assumption (Anderson et al., 1994). Theoretical citations and empirical data are expressed in terminology teachers may not apply to actual classroom experience. Teachers' culture and language are different from researchers'. Translations and understandings are markedly different; even though, similar terminology is used.

Developing Instructional Beliefs

Teachers begin developing learner and teacher beliefs through preservice programs and first teaching years. Beliefs are central to general understandings

of the world and future realizations; therefore, beliefs can either enhance, or impede, our knowledge advancement depending on the consideration given to what we *believe* relative to what we *consider* (Anderson et al., 1994; Fenstermacher, 1978). Instructional beliefs guide teacher actions and transfer to students *what* is important and *how* to acquire information. Additionally, instructional beliefs and practices leading to decision-making and implementation develop throughout a teacher's career (Kagan, 1992; Ruddell et al., 1994). Although teachers may not distinctly, or completely, describe all aspects involved in teacher instructional practices, teacher beliefs and theories regarding reading instruction can be ascertained through observation of practice (Harste & Burke, 1977).

The theory-approach to investigating instructional literacy knowledge becomes problematic for teacher-practitioners because multiple paths to success exist in differentiated instruction (Grimmett & Neufeld, 1994). Teachers can become confused when canvassing which literacy approach to implement. Facts either support theories, or not. One fact can devastate a theory supported by numerous other facts. Empirical knowledge allows individuals to examine competing theories by analyzing what is known factually about a concept presently being contemplated in its new form (Sowell, 2002). Multiple theories, programs, and dissemination practices of presentation styles are reasons contributing to teachers' confusion regarding selection of reading instructional approaches and programs. When receiving an answer to a question regarding an instructional approach, teachers utilize one of two competing mental processes: scientific and authoritarian (Bigge & Shermis, 1992). Accepting the

answer to an instructional concern because of who said it uses *authoritarian* criterion judgment, and is indicative of a belief. Antithesis to authoritarian is scientific inquiry: Investigating a question to an instructional concern for self-acquired knowledge. Investigating instructional theories is necessary and can assist educators with student achievement and teacher autonomy when deciding if disseminated information will be beneficial, and ultimately implemented, in the classroom. A problem with educational theories is the lack of believability factor ensuring classroom success. Teacher-practitioners often believe educational research has been based in theory derived from laboratories, not from problems experienced in classrooms (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2001). According to Bigge and Shermis (1992), learning theories take at least twenty-five years or more for translation and accommodation into existing culture, policy, and procedure: never really replacing predecessors, merely consistently competing creating intertwined complexity.

By cultural design, beliefs are built on facts, evolving theories, and perception of experiences. Educational theories have evolved throughout history from investigations and studies focused on understanding how complex neurological systems think and learn. Theories are defined as related laws and principles that attempt to explain aspects of behavior and learning (Slavin, 1986). Although behaviorist and cognitivist share similar goals to attain outcomes of modification, research-educators have often confused, but embraced behavior theories to the concept of learning in areas not designed for cognition. Theories of learning that have impacted reading instruction, and continue to do so in some regard, are (a) theistic mental discipline, (b) humanistic mental discipline,

(c) natural unfoldment or self-actualization, (d) apperception or herbartianism, (e) stimulus-response bond, (f) conditioning without reinforcement, (g) conditioning through reinforcement, (h) goal insight, (i) linear cognitive, and (j) cognitive- field interaction (Bigge & Shermis, 1992). Observation of teacher instructional practices allows researchers and educators opportunities to evaluate effectiveness of implemented disseminated information.

The term theistic is derived from theism: the belief in a deity or deities. Advocates of a theistic mental philosophy believe humans are innately born corrupt and only through training can the *will* be curbed (Bigge & Shermis, 1992). Automatic transfer of learned knowledge is derived from constant repetition of information. Theistic mental discipline involves training muscles in nonreading students' minds by extensive drill throughout the school day and return for additional mental exercises after school. A typical day would consist of flash cards, listing words, spelling words, reading and recognizing words, and daily tests.

Natural unfoldment, or self-actualization, developed from human-romanticism with nature and existential humanism. Humans are considered innately good, and through natural personality evolution and a supportive environment will develop into contributors to society (Bigge & Shermis, 1992). Natural unfoldment allows the child to first express interest in reading before the teacher assists with direction. Maturation and developmental concerns are of priority while ensuring the child has pleasant literacy experiences.

Apperception, or herbartianism, is telescoped concepts in which one simple idea adheres to broader complex understandings and issues.

Assimilation of ideas are achieved through the connection of one idea, or related ideas, to new information (Bigge & Shermis, 1992). Using a deductive teaching approach through receptive learning, large concepts are possibly introduced while allowing for specific examples and facts to be presented separately and consecutively (Slavin, 1986). Reading teachers would begin by alphabet letter instruction, progressing to sound instruction, and how consonant and vowels placed together form words. Rules would be given to direct how the building of reading concepts connect and apply. For students to understand *what* they are reading and to be *interested* in what is being read are the primary goals of this learning theory.

Stimulus-response theorists, or behaviorists, believe learning takes place based on the strength between the stimulus and response: S-R bond. The S-R bond and conditioning, with and without reinforcement, contend learning is a product of a stimulus attached to a reward or punishment indicator (Bigge & Shermis,1992). When behaviorist-based teachers instruct in reading, a reward or *reinforcement* is given for correct feedback with the belief this will increase the probability of repetition of accurate responses. The reward given to reinforce behavior is based on the Premack Principle in which repetition of low strength activities are increased by connection to a desired activity or outcome (Slavin, 1986).

Cognitivists embrace the concept of interaction leading to connective thoughts (Bigge & Shermis, 1992). Insights about learning, modeling learning, and restructuring of thoughts were purported through Gestaltist, Social Cognitivist, and Positive Relativism. From cognitivist, discovery learning and

cognitive-field interaction assists teacher instruction with *feeling* the sound of words by talking, discussing, conversing through rhyming, and developing sound-symbol relationships.

Robert Gagne´ bridged the existing behaviorist learning theories into an eclectic copulation of conditions needed for assimilation and accommodation for the purpose of school-based education. According to Gagne´, the conditions of learning are based on five categories of educational outcomes: verbal information, attitudes, motor skills, cognitive strategies, and intellectual skills (Bigge & Shermis, 1992). Through conditioning the learning process with (a) stimulus-response learning, (b) signal learning, (c) verbal association, (d) chaining, (e) concept learning, (f) discriminate learning, (g) mechanistic problem solving, and (h) rule learning, students can retain information through the teacher accessing connective elements within the nervous system. Teachers are to continue the learning process with the instructional events designed to present information in conceptual steps: (a) gain attention, (b) state objective, (c) activate prior recall, (d) engage through stimulus, (e) guide instruction, (f) provide process steps of outcome, (g) provide feedback, (h) enrich, and (i) transfer information to new concepts. The process Gagne´ outlines are similar to Bandura's *observation learning* in which students proceed through assimilation to accommodation by a similar series of conceptualized steps: (a) attention, (b) retention, (c) reproduction, and (d) motivation (Slavin, 1986). Additional emphasis is placed on reinforcing positive behavior through vicarious learning-situations (e.g., praising students modeling anticipated knowledge retention and application of expected learner behavior).

The meaning-construction philosophy of learning to read is founded in learner beliefs investigated by many research educators analogous to John and Lev Vygotsky: Students are replete with experiences bringing depth and reality to literacy understandings (Dewey, 1938; Vygotsky,1986). Oral language and literacy are developed in a parallel relationship: Reading and writing are correlated processes developing in parallel ability, as motor skills and experiences of print-awareness advance (Clay, 1979; Goodman & Goodman, 1980; Teale & Sulzby,1986). Activating prior knowledge is considered essential in building new understandings, and writing is the assessment medium allowing students to coalesce *as* thoughts to *new* understandings emerge (Rumelhart, 1984).

Historical documentation on meaning-construction, reading instruction is not easily acquired. The diversity of terminology associated with meaning-construction instruction is one reason the evolutionary roots are difficult to trace in education. According to Chall (1996), teaching children to read whole words by sight methods was embraced over the skills counterpart in the 1920's. Documented elements associated with meaning construction, learning to read include (a) naturalistic studies, (b) focus on reading strategies from meaning construction, (c) assessment and evaluation focusing on reading of whole text and word recognition investigation through miscue analysis, (d) assessments including comprehension, (e) reading is a natural process, and (f) meaning construction results are student dependent and context related (Goodman, 1998).

Interest in skills-based instruction has included terminology (e.g., *code-breaking)* describing the initial actions of learning to attach a sound to letter parts known as the alphabetic principle. Historically, studies investigating language acquisition focusing on letter sounds and word parts began to be documented in 1570 and continued into the beginning of the twentieth century (Chall, 1996). From a comprehensive investigation of the origin of reading instruction in the United States, however, what teacher training entailed in America prior to public schooling mandates in the U.S. colonial period is not available. Normal schools were the first documented teacher training schools in America; however, details of the teacher-training curricula is not documented. Even more elusive is information detailing what specific methods and procedures teachers utilized in classrooms regardless of learner theories and what the studies, if investigated, revealed. Goodman (1998) maintains the elements of skills-based learning to read instruction, or *word recognition*, encompasses (a) empirical studies with experimental and control groups, (b) focus is on word recognition acquisition, (c) assessment and evaluation based on decoding of regular and nonsense words, (d) comprehension and fluency are tested separately, (e) reading is learned through direct instruction, and (f) depending on the method, the skill result can be replicated. Theories developed from studies in the evolving understandings of literacy have assisted the education community in providing teacher-practitioners possibilities to choose among when confronted with varied student abilities in the American classroom.

Differentiated Instruction

A teaching theory grounded in varied instructional approaches correlated to both individual and diverse student classroom groupings is *differentiated instruction* (Hall, 2004). Differentiated instruction can be described as a process-approach to teaching and learning for the individual student and other students with differing abilities within the same class. Hall additionally ascertains differentiated instruction can maximize individual growth through assessing the starting point of instruction and progressing to success by educators' assistance. Many theories and practices claim differentiated instruction*;* however*,* the description in the title as differentiated instruction does not ensure outcomes, procedures, methods, or strategies have endured empirical validation. Due to the increase in American classroom diversity and inclusion, differentiated instruction has become a necessary classroom element. The total number of English as Language Learners (ELL) in public elementary and secondary schools for the 2002-2003 academic year consisted of 1,552,556 students. The largest ELL student populations attended public schools in New York City Public Schools (124,947 students) and Los Angeles Unified (320, 694 students). According to *Characteristics of the 100 Largest Public Elementary and Secondary School Districts in the United States: 2002-2003* report issued by the U.S. Department of Education (2005), all 100 reporting schools have a certain percentage of ELL students in the attending population. Considering American schools are culturally and academically diversified, teachers should collaborate with each other to develop ideas, methods, procedures, and options for all student success under the focus of differentiated instruction.

Teacher Autonomy

Most teachers relying on self-knowledge for reading instruction prioritize through assessing student needs. Knowledgeable inquiry could be ascertained through portfolios, anecdotal records, writing logs, reading behaviors, class discussions, and teacher reflection regarding classroom students (Durkin, 1987; Gennaoui & Kretschmer, 1996; Ruddell et al.,1994). Additionally, using school-based data in forms of tests, teacher observations, and questionnaires assists teachers in assessing and evaluating instruction and are considered authentic forms of assessment (Carr & Harris, 1993; Goodman & Goodman, 1980). According to the National Institute for Literacy (2004), high-stakes accountability issues derived from norm-referenced reading areas of academic testing has increased stress levels of teachers. While authentic assessment yields an individualized approach to pursuing academic achievement, high-stakes testing leads teachers to believe expediting learning cures, creating longevity tests, and inoculating ignorance for all students is not only facile at this time in history, but also required. According to Gennaoui and Kretschmer, teachers should investigate what needs to be modified and changed for reaching student goals: both group and individual. Teachers conduct research daily with students using *systematic, intentional inquiry* methods (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). Assignments are assessed for both short and long term acquisition. Modification of assignments is made based on outcomes of assessments with awareness the intended goal is for students to successfully complete or understand an objective. Success is often viewed as actual achievement through progress, rather than failure through lack of completion. Student success resulting from teacher

classroom investigations assists autonomy and confidence for educators (Kushman, 1992). When teachers feel students are achieving, teacher confidence increases allowing for the possibility of greater achievement. Kushman investigated the link of teacher commitment to student academic pursuits and student achievement finding committed teachers lead to committed students and increased achievement.

The need for teacher autonomy is conveyed through studies investigating modification of instructional formats for individual student success. A study by Englert and Semmel examined low, medium, and high readers and tutor prompting decisions (2001). The study concluded tutors prompted low readers significantly more than medium and high level readers. The implications of this study reveal teachers are critical components for active decisions for differentiated instruction based on student needs without directives from ancillary teacher materials. Factors (e.g., daily student disposition and short-term and long-term ability) are not accounted for, nor anticipated in program manuals, professional development, administrative directives, or the certainty teacher behaviors assist in instructional autonomy. According to the United States Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (2004), motivation, inspiration, and effective communication are necessary traits for teachers. Being creative, organized, patient, cooperative, and dependable are additional dispositions cited allowing teachers to pursue a productive career in education. Attributes listed by the Department of Labor assisting teachers' management of the stress of educational job requirements (e.g., creative and organized) are often indicative of an individual who procures

most instructional information through self-knowledge devices. Teachers who assimilate information through reflecting on classroom instruction experiences, preservice teacher training, and investigation of theories frequently leads to an eclectic teaching style of multiple successful outcomes (Grimmett & Neufeld, 1994). Teachers are considered valued decision-makers within the confounds defining the virtues of a balanced literacy approach (Spiegel, 1998).

Teacher empowerment is a necessary school climate trait ensuring the possibility educators have the capability to fulfill job requirements (Gennaoui & Kretschmer, 1996). Empowerment is perceived through a cyclic process by combined affects catalyzed by teacher commitment. Teacher commitment is espoused by the contributing extent of four specific factors: job stress, sense of professional fulfillment, involvement in leadership and collaboration, and positive climate for student learning (Kushman, 1992). Teacher-empowerment is a product of confidence from reflective and knowledgeable inquiry to classroom activity. Information from inquiry and knowledge teachers collect from additional sources is not always recognized and appreciated by others for possibly two reasons. First, articulation regarding source of information is deficit. Teachers often extrapolate reading instruction information and modify strategies applicable to current student populations. How teachers then define and explain combined approaches, procedures, and methods may be viewed as tenebrous. The second reason particular aspects of reading instructional practices are possibly not recognized by observers could be tasks required by the knowledge possibly hinders obviousness by others through explicit observation (Loughran, Mitchell, & Mitchell, 2003). The modifications teachers employ for diversifying student

needs are frequently difficult to recognize through both observational and conversational assessments. Educational terminology endures morphallaxis allowing teachers to provide evidence through practice.

The importance of teacher instructional knowledge [for students] takes precedence over any other ancillary material, media, or procedures. Researchers acknowledge teachers are the determining factor of whether students succeed, or not (Berry, Hoke, & Hirsch, 2004; Bond & Dykstra, 1967; Gorton & Schneider, 1991; Stinnett & Huggett,1956). According to McCormick (1999), materials, methods, and classroom organizations do not teach: Only teachers teach. Through changing student populations, evolving theories, compounded research, legislation mandates, and political and public pressures, teachers have acquired diversified skills capable of assisting varied reading instructional needs. Teachers have had to develop procedures and methods based on instructional practice and reflection superior to commercially published and investigated programs (Chall, 1996). Instructional information retrieved through various sources assists teachers in decision-making methods, procedures, and approaches regarding reading instruction needed for achievement for the individual in the classroom environment; however, the teacher is the decision-maker in what knowledgeable information should be attempted. John Carroll (2000) states, "…the preparation of instructional materials and teaching procedures is a task that requires countless decisions. It is not possible to base all of them directly on relevant research findings" (p. 15). Failure to consider how teachers advance knowledge in the reading process often leads to a program's dissipation (Haggar & McIntyre, 2000). Teachers

change approaches, methods, and procedures based on existing knowledge, beliefs, and experiences (Anderson et al., 1994; Coburn & Talbert, 2006). The decisions to choose, alter, or change an approach or instructional method is based primarily on students' needs, parental requests, and school policy influences. According to the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistic's, *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (2004*)*, more teachers are experiencing the aspect of teaching student groups consisting of varied age and ability. In an effort to find a solution for all students, teachers seek information, attempt new practice, and reflect. Teacher experimentation with various instructional methods and procedures are evaluated on two premises: if the new approach *worked* and whether it violates an educators' teacher or learner belief. If the new procedure works in assisting student success and is assimilated or accommodated into the educator's teacher or learner beliefs, the acquired or disseminated information is implemented (Coburn & Talbert, 2006; Denton et al., 2003; Pajares, 1992).

Anderson and other researchers concluded ignoring educators' beliefs could lead to failure of a presented practice designed for implementation (Anderson et al., 1994). Teachers often modify practices to *fit* into existing theories of instruction (Chall, 1996; Coburn & Talbert, 2006; Denton et al., 2003; Olson, 1981; Small, Sutton, Miwa, Urfels, & Eeisenberg, 1998). Teacher reflections of instruction filters through educators' held beliefs and existing practices assisting with the identification of potential failure and analysis of whether to disregard or modify practices. Teachers who pursue education through traditional teaching programs are afforded opportunities to observe other

teachers during the student-teaching phase. The visioning process assists teachers in analyzing literacy instructional perceptions, actions, and student outcomes allowing for modification to theoretical beliefs, if needed (Squires & Bliss, 2004). Presenters ignoring the possibility an instructional concept is not held, understood, or invested in by teacher groups risk the probability of implementation failure of potential disseminated information (Anderson et al., 1994; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2001; Showers, 1996).

Teachers feel devalued because of policy and curriculum changes made without discussion with the individuals intended to implement the decisions (Gennaoui & Kretschmer, 1996). Disillusionment and frustration on the part of teachers can be attributed to multiple factors (McLaughlin & Oberman,1996). An initial reason for devaluate awareness is a lack of input. The failure of implementing information presented from the district level is possibly attributed to the lack of knowledge in regard to protocol of dissemination of information and unsure cohesiveness within school climates. Facilitators, specialists, and guest speakers often fail to motivate teachers by not considering the manner in which particular groups respond to information experts. A second contributing factor is administrative level personnel undermining teacher practices. Atrophy of teacher autonomy through top-down management has contributed to negative relationships regarding the administrative presence within the school climate. If guest speakers invited at the request of the administrator, and not because the collective teacher group needs further information, implementation of disseminated information for new teacher practices most often fails. Absence of collegial exchange is an additional consideration for teachers in the decision-

making process. Reading teachers need time to share experiences and critically analyze each other with the pretense of assistance increasing autonomy and commitment to student achievement (Anderson et al., 1994; Showers, 1996; Shepherd & Ragan, 1992). Lack of recognition is a final reason for teacher devaluation (Kushman, 1992). Cognizance through feedback, assessment and evaluations, and achievement are administrative thoroughfares for advising and facilitating teacher personnel in regard to instructional practices. When teachers engage in leadership activities, performance reflection leads to better planning and increased student achievement (Smith & Piele,1997).

Teacher pedagogy is inundated with a multitude of theories, beliefs, practices, methods, trends, philosophies, and approaches. The belief that all students can learn on demand using the same material is not based in fact (Brooks & Brooks, 1999). The selection of teacher-practitioner instructional practices is embedded in various processes. The visioning process assists teachers in analyzing literacy instructional perceptions, actions, and student outcomes allowing for modification to theoretical beliefs (Squires & Bliss, 2004). The process of teaching reading requires daily assessment on the part of the teacher. Anderson proposes teacher self-questioning of reading instruction preparation might entail what the answers are to various instructional questions (Anderson et al., 1994). Initially, teachers observe and act on what the students' concerns are daily. Focusing on interest and prior knowledge of information increases a student's opportunity to understand the content of what is read (Rumelhart, 1984). A second possible question embedded in planning is what new strategies should be tried. Diversity of student interests and skills requires

teachers to experiment with strategies allowing for the possibility of achievement. Instructional practices necessitate adjustment due to the intricate nature of social, experiential, and academic factors involved in education (Vygotsky, 1986). Additionally, teachers may consider what type of social interaction exists between instructor and student when planning for reading instruction. The nuance of social exchange within student/teacher relationships can be unpredictable Teachers combine the answers to all reflective thoughts in order to determine procedures and content materials to use in reading instruction. Teacher analysis of essential components needed for reading success for all students (e.g., documenting outcomes and assessing program effectiveness) requires daily reflection of complex issues teachers and administrators encounter (Baker & Smith, 2001). Educators continually descry complex issues regarding reading instruction in which solutions are not invariably supplied and effortlessly implemented. Teachers have the daunting duel task of not only preserving societies' past through cultural conservation, but also improving the future through cultural improvement (Bigge & Shermis, 1992). The lack of acknowledgment education requires interaction, self control, and time in changing instructional direction regarding local, state, and national policies will continue to produce disappointing outcomes (Anderson et al., 1994). Frequent changes in educational policy may possibly perpetuate the cycle of teachers being viewed as recalcitrant: maintaining an air of public animosity in a continued state of divestiture for educators. The goals, objectives, and multiple local, state, and federal agencies' agendas for public education are not singular in voice convoluting what changes are actually needed (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2001).

Studies investigating reading teachers' practice of knowledge pursuits are sparse regarding knowledge and choice of information source. In a study investigating teacher literacy knowledge, fifty-nine volunteer first, second, and special education teachers were interviewed and observed with tailored performance-observation assessments (McCutchen et al., 2002). Lack of corollary relationship existed between teachers' instructional philosophy in regard to content knowledge. Additionally, no corollary was discovered between teachers' instructional philosophy in regard to classroom practice; however, relationships between instruction and content knowledge and between reading achievement and teacher phonological knowledge emerged. Recommendations were based on findings of the volunteered participant's performances consisting of disciplinary knowledge mandates should be considered for beginning reading teachers. Norris (2000) alleges teacher experience and teacher-based knowledge alone is too narrow and should be inclusive of research-based initiatives.

School Climate

School culture, researchers as facilitators of change, staff development, and teachers' beliefs are contributing factors to whether literacy instructional programs succeed or fail (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2001). An obstacle to teacher knowledge advancement through self-acquired or disseminating procedures, and sustaining implemented practices within classrooms, is agendas of instructional leaders (Foorman & Moats, 2004). According to Foorman and Moats, instructional leaders should be reading teachers, specialists, and principals. Investigating knowledge expansion of instructional practices disseminated and

influenced from various educational sources is often conflictive with teachers implementing reading instructional practices.

Morimoto (1973) asserts teachers are less likely to change practices based on outside decisional forces who are unaware of school climate variables; especially, inside classroom factors. Public polls can be useful in revealing societal educational goal preferences. Educational change occurs when learner-involved factors are considered: (a) issues of change are necessary solved within each classroom, (b) quality implementation is an outcome of support, (c) adult learning theory facitiliates the introduction of scientifically based instructional practices, and (d) students are impacted by change (Haggar & McIntyre, 2000). When the ends, or outcomes, are evident and clear, the decision making process becomes a matter of design selection and implementation (Davis,1999; Dewey, 1938; Schön, 1983). Negative media attention through accountability issues presents teachers as lazy, stodgy, and resistant to change (Anderson et al.,1994; Popham, 1993). Pressure from communities and other public sources have demanded accountability from teachers based on partial student output (e.g., standardized test scores). Raised questions about needs for centralized control over professional teacher autonomy in regard to the classroom and decision-making power have become battle ground states (Ballantine, 1993). Although, problems exist with any anticipated change within organizations, educational change has specific barriers including (a) habit, (b) bureaucratic structure of school and district, (c) lack of incentive, (d) the nature of the proposed change, (e) teacher and community norms, (f) lack of understanding, (g) difference of opinion, and (h) lack of skill

(Gorton & Schneider, 1991). Even though the important link between teaching and learning is evident, the state of teaching has been devalued within the educating community and with professional educators creating a climate of distrust with issues of change (Loughran et al., 2003; Gorton & Schneider, 1991).

Successful learning communities have various components necessary for acclimating information. Of focus are both singular and multiple learning grouping aspects: (a) teacher learning, (b) student learning, (c) collaborative learning, (d) administrative learning, and (e) community learning (Cibulka & Nakayama, 2000). All factors and conditions influencing student learning within a school is considered the instructional program (Gorton & Schneider, 1991). The most important factor within the instructional program effecting student outcome is the teacher. According to the Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Occupational Handbook* (2004), site-based managed schools and school districts have increased in number allowing teachers aggrandized involvement with decision making of budgeting, hiring, curriculum designing, purchasing of textbooks, and selecting teaching materials. Lortie (1975), describes school ethos as the hidden components of school climate in respect to three characteristics: individualism, presentism, and conservatism. Uncertainty and anxiety are created due to a lack of a universally accepted professional knowledge based within a school's culture. The individual may not rely on other sources other than self from experience, knowledge, or skills (Fuchs, 1969). Teacher-practitioner rejection of instructional disseminated information as it pertains to school climate is based in two philosophies: presentism and conservatism. Presentism is observed by failure of teachers to long-range plan

based on insecurity of future performances. Conservatism is rejection of organizational imposed methods, goals, and objectives relying on past experience and personal values (Anderson et al., 1994). A supportive school climate accepting of investigations regarding pedagogy is an essential component needed for teachers' evolving understandings. Academic freedom assists teachers in preparing methods, procedures, approaches, and materials needed for reading instruction to diversified student populations. *The Occupational Outlook Handbook (2004)* additionally, claims the sense of unattainable teacher autonomy may have been the leading cause of slightly more than half of all teachers of elementary, middle, and secondary schools becoming union members in 2002. Most school climates embrace either traditional or reformative practices. *Schools of yesterday* refer to a change in structural and philosophical beliefs hoping to be taking place. These traditional schools have all activities within school parameters, set times for class subjects, narrow view of education consisting of sole school, unidisciplinary classes, and top-down decision making. *Schools of today* refers to the ideal school environment in which teacher-practitioners are focused on interaction with the world, having varied class lengths, initializing global school projects, and valuing educators as decision-makers (Serim & Koch, 1996). Teacher-practitioners leading the dissemination of information on instructional practices, deciding financial expenditures, and selecting materials are considered actions indicative of schools of educational reform.

Literacy Instruction in the United States

Reading materials have existed in America for the purpose of children practicing to read since the Colonial era. The *Horn Books, New England Primers*, and *McGruffy Eclectic Readers* were the first basal-readers used in literacy education. The existence of basals with the scientific movement of the 1920's purported comparative student data for the purpose of evaluating children's literacy ability: Literacy tests catalyzed the search for the best method approach. Researchers began to compile lists of methods and procedures for teachers based on the outcomes of test-related data conducted in the 1930's (Chall, 1996). Simultaneously, teacher anecdotal records assisted in the development of workbooks: *Phonetic Keys* was originally developed by Mrs. Cornelia Brown Sloop, a primary teacher (Aukerman, 1984). The testing of the *Phonetic Keys* instrument by other research-educators through inquiry-based instruction lead to the evolution of reading programs and basal instruction through the outcomes of student testing data representative in works of *Reading With Phonics* and *Hay Wingo* developed by Charles E. Wingo and Miss Julie Hay in 1942. In the quest to identify key components necessary for student reading achievement, transcendence of data-driven reading materials continued. The *Carden Method* developed by Mae Carden was the alternative to phonetic instruction in which students were taught by a *look-say* method. Mae Carden's approach to teaching literacy was motivated by public dispersed publications titled *Educational Wastelands* and *Tomorrow's Illiterates* in the 1950's. According to the *Carden Method*, the five components necessary for effective reading instruction are (a) phonics, (b) rhythms, (c) word groupings, (d) analysis

of sentence structure, and (e) reading aloud of children's classical literature. Even though Ms. Carden was against the progressive movement of the 1930's, the public as a whole- perceived the *look-say method* endorsed by progressive education due to the alternative educational stance embraced. The gap between children learning to read through phonics instruction as compared to the new, and different, *look-say* method was created and labeled as progressive. *Breaking the Sound Barrier* (Dambach,1960), and *Ginn Basic Readers* (Chall, 1996) followed with mixed-approaches to teaching literacy. Based on researcher investigations and the federal government's agenda for science-based initiatives for historical precedence, publications for enlightening the public unveiled. Flesch's book *Why Johnny Can't Read- and What You Can Do About IT* published in 1955 generated hostility on the part of educators for an attack on autonomy and the public for presenting teachers as lacksadaisical. In 1967, Chall wrote *Learning to Read: The Great Debate* sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation in order to investigate *best practices* in reading acquisition (Chall,1996). Investigations' conclusions of the publications resulted in emphasis on phonics instruction with basal text generated for the practice of *code-breaking*.

It was not until the 1980's reading instruction debates intensified, not from the aspect of researchers, but from the federal government in the form of reports. *A Nation at Risk* (NCEE, 1983) was issued citing the deficiencies existing in American education. Two years later in 1985, *Becoming a Nation of Readers* was released as a response to *A Nation at Risk* (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985). Both reports advocated a need for higher standards in reading instruction based on results of academic comparison tests taken from 1969-1977

in conjunction with a focus on health, science, and technology fields. Although copious amounts of research literature exists on the reading process, evidence of instructional planning practices teachers have knowledge of and implement have not been investigated explicitly (Anderson et al., 1994). Resources providing reading research instructional knowledge are available in professional and scholarly journals, as well as governmental literature titled *What Works* (USDE, 1986) and *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (Anderson et al., 1985). Reid Lyon stated in the *Overview of Reading and Literacy* Initiatives forum to the Committee on Labor and Human Resources, research has failed to influence teacher practices we have in school settings and classrooms (1998). Lyon continues citing possible rationales by adding, "…inadequate teacher preparation, the tendency for educational practices and policies to be guided by philosophical and ideological facts rather than scientific factors, and the persistent of poor quality design of much of the educational research conducted to date". What followed was a series of guidelines and initiatives delivered by the U.S. Department of Education in an effort to form the best practices for teachers through NCLB legislation.

Federal Focus for Educational Guidelines

Throughout United States' history, research guidelines have assisted the public with governmental understandings regarding social issues and concerns. The 1960's published guidelines predominantly for diplomatic relations, social conduct, economics, social studies, and social obedience. Economics, emotional, mental, judicial decisions, and physical well-being dominated the 1970's. The 1980's were replete with environmental issues and social interests.

Medical issues and knowledge-based inquiries regarding patients care were the focus of the 1990's. As the medical field accumulated guidelines, the education community followed.

Peer-reviewed studies, or research-based journal articles, frequently lead to guidelines for teachers. The American Psychological Association Task Force rationale for Guidelines for School Redesign and Reform was an effort to focus studies from political agendas and educational policy changes to assist teachers building learner-center classrooms (APA Task Force on Psychology in Education,1993). While checklists and guidelines possibly provide quick access for selected information for teachers; however, caution should be exerted on behalf of teacher-practitioners before implementing instructional recommendations. Sources should convey credibility through understanding appropriateness of intent for the classrooms' unforeseeable factors (Davis, 1999).

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965)

In Bailey and Mosher's *ESEA (1968): The Office of Education Administrator's Law*, a comprehensive assessment of the social-political condition of United States' educational status is historically recounted.
The authors claim federal funds supporting public education tripled after the passage of The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The ESEA of 1965 was passed under extreme political stress between the Democrat and Republican parties. President Johnson, a Democrat, signed the initial legislation; however, thirty-five years later President Bush, a Republican, reenacted ESEA as the No Child Left Behind Act. The federal government can decide how much

authority over education is warranted through liberal interpretation of Article I, Section 8 (General Welfare Clause). Administrative prudence and political values dictate American federalism rather than constitutional authority. Although the United States government views education as evolving, malleable, and ambiguous, it is also fundamental.

A Nation at Risk

The next federal focus on education followed eighteen years later in the form of an alarm. *A Nation at Risk* (NCEE, 1983) was a report issued by the federal government stating the United States' public school systems' student performance was classified as *mediocre* and *substandard* compared to other industrial countries. This fear projected by the United States government was conveyed through stating students would not be prepared to maintain America's competitive edge in commerce, morality, intelligence, and industry. The facts of the report included (a) the United State's student population ranked last on seven of nineteen academic tests- never first or second, (b) twenty-three million adult Americans were functionally illiterate, and (c) seventeen year olds lacked higher-order thinking capability. The report continued to identify years of the declining student achievement pattern from the years 1969, 1973, and 1977. Concern the industry future was dependent on the success of computer technology skills needed for job requirements of robotics and healthcare were cited.

Goals 2000: Educate America

On March 31, 1994, eleven years after A Nation at Risk, Goals 2000: Educate America Act was signed by President George H. Bush. Five

considerations guided the report. All students are capable of learning and should be instructed with the intention of information retention. The second and third guiding principles involve school management: instructional improvement is based on school leadership, and concurrent bottom-up and top-down reform is imperative. Input from all instructional leaders and implementers are vital. Instructional strategies should be created locally with inclusive coordination efforts. Focus on the school environment and student population assisted in selecting appropriate procedures. Finally, all school community groups should invest in improvement by assisting development of goals and objectives. The three overarching principles organizing the report were (a) student expectations should be clear and conveyed by all community groups, (b) high student expectations should be conveyed, and (c) student achievement should increase by focusing on anticipated results.

No Child Left Behind Act

The National Reading Panels' fifteen members issued a press release March 27, 1998, stating Congress had mandated an investigation on effective reading instructional practices: The National Reading Panel's *Teaching Children to Read* was mandated by Congress to investigate instructional practices proven to increase student achievement (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). The effect of the serial investigation produced debates of the legitimacy, or the lack thereof, of teaching methods and strategies. Through the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Occupational Handbook* (2008) released to the public annually, the United States Department of Education acknowledges and advocates three areas of instructional practice

teachers are responsible for: (a) instruction, (b) assessing and evaluating student progress , and (c) classroom management. Teachers were to achieve *highly qualified* status. Under NCLB the United States Department of Education (2006) currently defines highly qualified teachers as having (a) a bachelor's degree in subject matter teaching, (b) state teacher certification, and (c) demonstrating knowledge in the subject taught. Additionally, four pillars support the No Child Left Behind initiative. Accountability for student achievement on the part of schools and teachers is required. Community and state freedom is allowed in academic pursuits in order to provide selection of practices and methods necessary for student diversity. School choice, both public and private, for parents' consideration for students not achieving through vouchers has been debated for years. Private schools are included in the achievement stipulation in that school choices are not limited to the public sector. Proven instructional methods, the most debated of the four principles, conveys an atmosphere in direct conflict with the academic freedom within confined boundaries. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) in February 2007 issued a legislative platform regarding the continued influence of the NCLB Act in the form of recommendations. The NCTE adduces the current education legislation has not consistently led to desired outcomes, and improvements are needed. In regard to advancing teacher- practitioner instructional information, the NCTE recommends literacy knowledge transmission through professional development. Additionally, the NCTE advocates scientifically- based research terminology allowing for variety in appropriate methodological approaches to address the questions and concerns of literacy instruction.

The NCLB of 2001 signed by President George W. Bush reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 under the executive decision of President Lyndon B. Johnson. According to the federal government under the initial design of the NCLB legislation, methods, procedures, and approaches must meet three specific qualifiers: empirical, random, and rigorous. A literature companion for educators further details how to ascertain information for research credibility in *Using Research and Reason in Education: How Teachers Can Use Scientifically Based Research to Make Curricular and Instructional Decision*s released by the National Institute for Literacy (2005). Teacher-practitioners are to evaluate the credibility of either self-acquired or presented information determining if the research has been scrutinized by peer review: a panel of experts in the field of study. Teacher-practitioners are recommended to doubt the outcomes, results, methods, if analysis through experts is absent from the presented or acquired information. A second consideration is whether the method, procedure, strategy is supported by replicated evidence. Teacher-practitioners are to question if other scientists have concluded the same results from the experiment: Scientific knowledge should be open to public scrutiny. In summation, the suggestion is stated teachers should challenge and collaborate with other teachers regarding educational research claims debating what works, or does not, in the classroom setting.

A major provision of NCLB focuses on strengthening teacher quality through three initial areas: teacher quality, teacher programs, and teacher pedagogical development. States will work to place highly qualified teachers in every classroom with an ending date of 2005. The *ESEA: Improving Teacher*

Quality State Grants, FY 2008 Program Performance Plan cites the program goal is “to improve teacher and principal quality and increase the number of highly qualified teachers in the classroom and highly qualified principals and assistant principals in schools” (USDE, 2007). In measure 1.1 of 6, the 2005 targeted percent of highly qualified teachers was 90, with a reported 93% as actual. Even though the target for highly qualified teachers was exceeded in 2005, for the following years of 2006, 2007, and 2008 are still listed as *pending* according to the U.S. Department of Education’s report on state performance (USDE, 2008). Flexibility with teacher quality programs are offered to states through the U.S. Department of Education by consolidating smaller programs. Additionally, local schools are allowed more freedom with Title 1 funds to assist and improve teacher development. The new Title II funding emphasizes preparing and training of teachers as well as recruiting highly qualified teachers and principals. The focus of NCLB primarily shifts away from college-based programs to alternative teacher licensure and school inservice improvements through professional development. State funds are primarily allocated, through FY 2001 requirements initiated under the Eisenhower Professional Development/Class-size Reduction programs. According to the Mississippi Institute for Higher Learning for example, the *NCLB: Teacher Quality Improvement Program* assists in providing funding for professional development and hiring Local Education Agencies (LEA’s) to ensure teachers are highly qualified (2008).

Self-Acquired Teacher Literacy Knowledge

Confusion of educators clearly self-assessing instructional beliefs and disseminated or self-acquired information is derived from many sources. Limited time to investigate various instructional practices and methods in conjunction with established induction beliefs are contributing factors why teachers do not deviate from established belief patterns (Hollingsworth, 1988). According to *The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) Report (USDE, 1991)*, schools view the skills the business world requires as undefined and unclear in expectations of abilities all students should possess. School culture, researchers as facilitators of change, staff development, and teachers' beliefs are contributing factors to whether programs succeed or fail (Caine & Caine, 1994; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2001; Hamilton & Richardson, 1995; Shanahan & Barr, 1995; Vaughn & Dammann, 2001).

If students fail to demonstrate success by teacher expertise, educators often seek reading instructional information from non-personable sources to assist in supplying students with skills and strategies needed to fulfill goals and objectives (Denton et al., 2003). Possible sources of self-acquired literacy information include teacher preservice, reading literature methods, teacher prepared books and materials, and reflections of classroom practices (Burns et al., 1999). While collaboration of acquired reading instructional information might be viewed as useful to some teachers, autonomy is a goal for others (Kushman, 1992).

Teachers often have a multitude of available sources and materials when reading instructional change is needed, demanded, or wanted (Cibulka &

Nakayama, 2000; Gorton & Schneider, 1991; Shannon & Goodman, 1994). Administrators, peer teachers, consultants, specialists, reading program manuals, district objectives guidelines and the Internet represent examples of accessible resources providing instructional information to reading teachers. Individuals and materials in daily contact with teachers appear to provide the most readily available information; however, many problems may exist with any source providing information in regard to credibility, reliability, and agenda (Davis, 1999).

Teacher isolation leads to other possible avenues for sources of reading instruction Information other than collaborative or group dissemination. The feeling of isolation, or sensing of being out of touch with others, is common for some teachers in decompartmentalized, instructional, and organizational settings as reported by United States Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (2004). Informative sources selected by teacher-practitioners from feeling isolated are not always assessed for credibility, but more by usability (Davis, 1999). Educator survival instinct often leads to what is readily available, more so than what is credible (Caine & Caine, 1994). Schools providing collegial opportunities for teachers to discuss and provide feedback have been investigated for impact on instructional practice. The relationship of collaboration to teacher-practitioner adopted source seeking practices has found to be important for implementation (Anderson et al., 1994).

Problems with individual teachers seeking reading instruction develop when, in the course of investigating, multiple routes to excellence emerge (Grimmett & Neufeld, 1994). Educational research, attempting clarification

through discovery, frequently compounds facts and theories explaining the existence of various possibilities of successful routes in learning to read (Ballantine, 1993). In contrast, unitary reading models create inflexibility restricting teacher judgment for individualized instruction when needed. Eclecticism develops from teacher contemplation of multiple theories, encounters with various disseminating instructional sources, and experience with diverse student populations. Modification of related theories and practices are a product of attempt to individualize instruction. Frequently, observers fail to recognize a theory-based practice or approach due to necessary changes for unaccountable factors encountered in classroom practices.

Preservice programs at the university level provide teachers with initial exposure of literacy theories, methods, and approaches regarding the complex nature of reading processes. Teachers continue to embrace and adopt beliefs from university programs especially during the first years of classroom teaching when instructional stress factors are considered excessive (Denton et al., 2003). Teacher and learner beliefs are introduced throughout teacher training programs, and reflection of preservice candidates on their own educational experiences further embed learner beliefs. Preservice teacher programs offer base-level understanding of how reading theories assist in instructional practice (Burns et al., 1999). According to Darling-Hammond and Cobb (1996), teachers attending and completing preservice education programs are considered superior to individuals pursuing alternate routes of certification in the dimensions of (a) knowledge of students, (b) teaching strategies' repertoire, (c) teacher knowledge of learning styles, (d) classroom management, (e) curriculum development, and

(f) assessment and evaluation for instructional planning.

Although opportunities for knowledge acquisition of reading through university settings are tremendous, opposition to programs designed to assist teachers with reading instructional theories, methods, approaches, research, and procedures are highly visible and gaining federal support. According to Mather, Bos, and Babur, neither preservice teachers nor teacher-practitioners are adequately prepared to instruct at-risk students in contradiction to Darling-Hammond and Cobb's endorsement of preservice educational programs (Mather, Bos, & Babur, 2001; Darling-Hammond & Cobb, 1996). The National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child and Human Development, 2000) reported teacher knowledge, regardless of source of information utilized, is credited with unsuccessful student performance of low achievers. Teachers may feel inundated by the lack of student success as assessed by national norms and have denunciated preservice programs even though student achievement has increased according to the National Center for Educational Statistics (1999). Some teachers feel pedagogical training was inadequate preparation for the demands of teaching today (Ballantine, 1993). Reid Lyon in a report to the Committee on Labor and Human Resources, Senate Dirkson Building in Washington, D.C., stated teachers are under prepared for the instruction of reading based on data revealed in government surveys to access teacher knowledge regarding reading development and difficulties (Lyon, 1998). An argument against teacher preparation programs evolves from issues supporting teacher knowledge of subject area over method of teaching practice. Rita Kramer (1991) credits the attention to individuals has diminished the pursuit of

common values of a larger society. Additionally, Kramer believes teachers are being educated in methods without possessing the knowledge of the content to apply the training (1991). Kramer suggests teacher preservice programs reform through three legislative routes: proficiency testing, reformation of legislative standards, and defined roles. National proficiency testing for teachers is a change Kramer platforms for teacher qualifications. A second solution would be having universally accepted legislative standards. A final consideration is more district control over defining needed roles. Although none of the three above suggestions are necessarily directly inherent of preservice programs, all are conceivably experienced by teachers entering the workforce. Even though teacher preparation programs have gradually ameliorated regarding testing and graduation, neither universities nor state department requirements may assist teachers in gaining the degree of knowledge needed to teach reading successfully to all students (Lyon, 1998). The National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Educational Science (2007) investigated teacher attrition in a follow-up survey from 2003-04. The study concluded 8% moved to other schools and 8% left the teaching profession of the 3,214,900 public school teachers during 2003-04. Reasons given by public school participants for either moving or leaving included pursuing better teaching assignments, retiring, and balancing work and personal life. Of the public school teachers 30 years old or younger, 15% moved to other schools, and 9% left the teaching profession. Preservice programs are possibly not preparing all teacher candidates for future educator responsibilities; furthermore, the National Reading Panel additionally stated university training possibly could be considered an obstacle to research

regarding reading instruction for beginning teachers (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000).

Another source of teacher self-knowledge acquisition of reading instruction is reading texts and ancillary materials. Most reading series offered today provide variety in alternative strategies and skills to be taught with each lesson. Although caution should be exercised by teachers in remembering there exists no singular-set of procedures or reading series guaranteeing all students will learn to read if used (Chall, 1996; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). The student elements needed for reading combines knowledge, motivation, and engagement: Instruction is a combination of these elements (Cambourne, 2002; Burns et al., 1999; Morrow, Strickland, & Woo, 1998). The concept of diversity exceeds beyond racial connotations and encompasses the degree of knowledge, motivation, and engagement of individual students. Increased diversity of student classroom populations presently demands an eclectic theory base. An investigation in 1994 of randomly selected basals were evaluated to ascertain if suggestions for mainstreaming, or inclusion for students was supplied. Out of the six basals examined, four contained no evidence of suggested procedures or activities for mainstreamed students; and of the remaining two, information was limited (Schumm, Vaugh, Haager, & Klinger, 1994). Implications suggest teachers may not be able to rely on literature supplied district books for suggested methods and procedures to assist with knowledge advancement regarding reading instruction for success of all students. Lack of publisher knowledge regarding background of reading processes and training of teacher preservice programs contribute to failure to

implement literacy instruction contained within ancillary materials.

The evolution of the term *reading* in and of itself has confused educators. Reading has been analyzed through both process and product moments. Researchers investigating the components needed for literacy describe reading as a complex process of understanding evolving skills and knowledge about print, word strategies, learner engagement, and self-motivation (Ehri, 1991; Gallego & Hollingsworth, 2000; Smith, 1994). Reading has adopted a global definition as the understandings an individual gains from experiencing the world compos mentis, not necessarily rooted in *word decoding* (Bredekamp & Coople, 1997). With diversity surrounding the terminology of *reading*, published teacher-help books often advocate an ideology espousing supporting theories convoluting a saturated supply of instructional input. Teachers, therefore, select books based on titles and contents aligned with instructional and learner beliefs felt necessary for student success (Denton et al., 2003). Educator intentions to self-acquire literacy knowledge is indicative of teacher autonomy; occasionally, autonomy is unsupported in the school environment.

Administrators as a Source of Literacy Knowledge

Every school has, or is in the process of evolving, a culture. Attitudes, norms, and beliefs serve a purpose of creating a climate directing rituals and ceremonies taking place (Ballantine, 1993). Climate subsumes values shared among student, teachers, administrators, non-faculty personnel, and parents in individual schools (Shepherd & Ragan, 1992). Conditions stimulating positive school climate include (a) family sense, (b) trust, (c) communication, (d) stimulating, supportive environment, (e) positive expectations, (f) rewards, (g)

feedback, (h) achievement, (i) parent and community cohesiveness, and (k) student-centered teaching. Studies attempting to identify and measure variables associating school climate with student success have been conducted in order to identify factors to facilitate an environment conducive to professional growth through organizational learning. Hoy and Sabo (1998) investigated measures of school climate finding three current trends. School climate is being identified as an independent variable attempting to explain staff performances and student outcomes. Consideration assessing exchange of academic relationships addresses school climate survey *snapshots* conjoined with teacher evaluations providing information attempting change to manage behavior. The importance of the survey findings of school climate assists administrators in providing an environment for both teacher and student growth. If the school climate exudes a supportive atmosphere of shared learning, teacher-practitioners are more likely to investigate different avenues of sources of information for literacy instruction (Ballantine, 1993; Klinger, Vaughn, Hughes, & Arguelles, 1999; Swafford, 1998)

Administrators are group-classified as instructional leaders of the school, and are considered necessary for ensuring effective implementation of reading instructional strategies (Wepner, Feely, & Strickland, 1995). According to Smith and Piele (1997) in *School Leadership: Handbook for Excellence,* administrators are in a position to provide teachers with research findings, articles, and conference opportunities to assist in inculcating an atmosphere of assistance. Unfortunately, administrators experience difficulty exercising authority from a lack of limited knowledge of use and conditions within circumstances for which the position is designed (Gorton & Schneider, 1991).

The teacher-administrator relationship of disseminating information exchange is further inhibited by instructional evaluations. A plausible explanation could be teachers feel observations reveal *red-flags* of instructional weaknesses to a source who could ultimately use perceived deficits as information for due process. A study conducted by Wise and Hammond (1985) concluded educational evaluation objectives should be considered professional, and not bureaucratic. The criterion for the professional model of teacher evaluations encompasses four factors. First, the teacher is involved in the process of evaluation. Ballantine (1993) elucidates two fundamental purposes of teacher evaluations exist: growth and due process. The element of trust is fractionated due to the duality of the administrative role of *help* or *harm*. If the true purpose of evaluations is for growth, teacher involvement will be evident in preparing for evaluation of observations.

The second factor addressing professional evaluations considers the aspect of the practice-oriented concept. Teachers are appropriated time to reevaluate collaborated suggestions and concerns with administrators adjusting and preparing for feedback through reevaluation. A third issue designed for teacher growth through evaluations addresses concern for the administrative awareness of various successful, multiple instructional approaches and styles. Educators adjust and pursue approaches and styles assisting student achievement and pedagogical growth. Finally, administrators should view teachers' instructional effectiveness based on level of experience, classroom goals, and classroom assignment. Every teacher is different in regard to what is understood about the literacy base of reading regarding the elements of

instruction, objectives and procedures, and management of the classroom atmosphere.

In contrast to the professional model is the bureaucratic evaluation model. This model exhibits four component criterion specific to gauging teacher compliance with dissemination of instructional information. The first identifiable feature is administrator design without teacher input regarding areas in need of constant evaluation and evolving knowledge. Administrators evaluating using the bureaucratic evaluation model concept embraces the idea of observing for a particular skill instead of the completeness of the lesson. Recognizing and approving fixed ideas of outcomes suggests bureaucratic evaluations lack a realistic understanding of diversity and uncontrollable factors influencing classroom environments. Finally, administrators treating teachers dissimilarly in regard to favoritism are supporting a school climate of instructional hierarchy leading to devaluation (Wise & Darling-Hammond, 1995). Additionally, administrators who fail to recognize time for teacher practice improvement creates stress for the school environment: This tension can become considerable for teachers (White, Sturtevant & Dunlap, 2003).

According to Gorton and Schneider (1991), teacher evaluations have two initial purposes. Identifying areas where teachers may need assistance and supervision through objective feedback regarding reading instruction improvement is critical for pedagogical evolution (Shepherd & Ragan, 1992). Feedback provides teachers with not only cogent information for instructional improvement, but also conveys a level of support provided through performance assessment of fulfilling job requirements. Deciding if a teacher needs to be

dismissed, or contract not renewed, is the second reason for evaluations (Gorton Schneider, 1991). Many teachers feel the purposes of evaluations are directly conflicted. When administrators observe teacher classroom practice, educators working in an authoritarian-bureaucratic atmosphere are dubious if an administrator's purpose is to assist, or dismiss.

School administrators often choose the topic for professional staff development blocking growth and change for individual teacher instructional needs (Gennaoui & Kretschmer, 1996). Choice is an important catalyst for change with teachers. Permanent change is an individual's belief investment bought into only through certainty of a beneficial outcome according to Gennaoui and Kretschmer. Teachers overwhelmed by classroom diversity often conclude solutions are not evident, or accessible. Barriers obstructing educator support systems for inquiry lack teacher autonomy and frequency in educational, systemic, and structural change (Anderson et al., 1994). Failure to recognize teachers as educational collaborators produces climates of distrust contributing to organizational malfunction (Kushman, 1992). Ballantine (1993) states, "Intervention in classroom teaching may become virtually impossible; therefore, decisions made at administrative levels have little impact on classrooms."

Administrators have the responsibility to provide opportunities for school success in regard to disseminating reading instruction information assisting student achievement by encouraging teacher growth (Smith & Piele, 1997). According to Klinger, school leaders' values regarding instructional practices increase teacher implementation (Klinger et al.,1999). Administrators contribute to successful reading programs by implementing distinct conditions in the school

climate. First, administrators should provide time for teachers planning and carrying out instruction. Allowing teachers to implement and reflect on practices is critical to future planning. A second consideration is teachers are active decision-making partners increasing sense of empowerment and school cohesiveness. Teacher instruction is observed and supervised as a third component of successful reading programs. Offering constructive feedback through objective analysis is essential for growth. Consistent professional development sessions and focus on current school situations should be provided to teachers allowing for appropriate planning and assisting school direction and mission. Finally, teachers observe other teachers considered successful, or ideal, by district or school standards. (Showers,1996; McCormick, 1999). When teachers observe other educators administrators have identified as possessing requisites of instructional practices, a visual understanding of deficient areas is conveyed.

Professional Development as a Source of Literacy Knowledge

A source of information requiring minimal interaction for reading instruction knowledge for teachers is professional, or staff, development. Professional development is often the path selected by teachers who want to gain information and instructional strategies without assistance and collaboration from others (Swafford, 1998). Teachers select professional development from the lack of support felt from others while attempting to change beliefs, practices, and instructional strategies. School climates inculcating singular approaches, intolerance for investigation, and collegial competitiveness are often identified by providing primarily professional opportunities as compared to academic

surroundings embracing individual pedagogical evolution through collaboration. Professional, or staff, development is “a set of processes that are either imposed on a group of teachers or are initiated by an individual teacher” (Anderson et al., 1994). Cole (1991) describes three forms of staff development prevalent in most schools externally driven, teacher initiated, and collaborative. Externally driven staff development topics produced by outside forces focuses on concentrated content with various time allotments from several hours to several days depending on presenter and subject matter. Teacher-initiated development allows individual professional growth either through group, computer networking, or university courses. Collaborative staff development is a partnership of a facilitating group and a participating group. Although the United States Department of Education underpins externally driven professional development inferred from teacher questionnaires, outside forces are not effective in changing teacher practice (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2001). Staff development is designed to impart information for the purpose of changing teacher behavior.

Although many tactical styles of presentations are available and employed, problems exist for some teachers receiving disseminated information for literacy knowledge expansion from professional development. Personnel responsible for professional development often embrace multiple methods of instructional beliefs (Allington, 2002). Teachers are often seeking quick, singular solutions for reading instruction; therefore, presentations focused on varied methods often leave teachers confused. Professional development as one-day workshops fails to provide lasting affects in changing teacher practice (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2001; Miller & Lord, 1993). When teachers lack ownership and purpose

toward topics designed to improve student achievement through instructional change, concern for success is lost (Gennaoui & Kretschmer, 1996). In the *Status of Education Reform in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools: Teachers' Perspective provided by the National Center for Education Statistics* (NCES, 1991), 41% of teacher-practitioners indicated in a survey professional development topics were planned according to the overall school needs. The following year, the survey was readministered and revealed 80% of teacher-practitioners were attending professional development focused primarily on local and state curriculum performance standards. Fuchs and Fuchs (2001) allege external forces fail in changing behavior of teacher practices. Even though professional development has not had a successful relationship with change in schools, it is still the most selected choice of means for disseminating information to teachers (Anderson et al., 1994). Occasionally, guest facilitators and speakers attempt to convey specialized knowledge to teacher-audiences without considering, or recognizing, climate and culture markers (Gennaoui & Kretschmer, 1996). Teachers are possibly unsure of presentation content and language used; therefore, any attempt to modify and implement instructional beliefs, theories, and methods is nullified. Scholarly experts are often classified by teachers as antagonistic in that concepts and ideas are inflated for presentations, and consultants investigate scholarly issues excluding unforeseen factors only encountered in classroom experiences (Anderson et al., 1994).

In order to offer teacher-practitioners individual assistance on presented information, the peer coaching element assists guest speakers in gauging the probability the disseminated knowledge will be assimilated. Staff development

programs offer support through peer coaching and teacher reflection (Swafford, 1998). According to the United States Department of Labor Bureau, Labor Statistics, *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (2004), professional development schools are offered in some states in which universities assist elementary and secondary schools preparing new teachers through a one year program. Partnering with universities assists teachers as researchers (Gennaoui & Kretschmer,1996). Teacher consultants listen to and take lead from teachers guiding transformation of problems to topics of inquiry (Gennaoui & Kretschmer, 1996). According to the practitioners were more likely to attend collaborative activities (e.g., mentoring and team teaching) as opposed to networking with off-campus peers, peer planning periods, and individual investigations of professional interest (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). Additionally, 45% of teacher-practitioners were more likely to rate an increase in improved instruction if time was allocated to collaborate as compared to other educators spending less than three times a month with peer instructional exchange: Collaboration assists professional development through assessing if methods and procedures might be successful through verbal interaction with others within the same school climate.

Professional, or staff, development presenters should consider three distinct of understandings teachers possess prior to presentations. Teachers should have knowledge of the practice from experience and other outside sources. Presenters should allocate time for teachers to expound on knowledge beliefs prior to dissemination of information (Showers, 1996). A second consideration is empirical understandings from scholarly or current research

could be fueling the need for the professional development. Relative issues, areas of confusion, and facts regarding these topics should be addressed and presented. Finally, actual classroom experience initializes held knowledge and beliefs through which to filter new information (Anderson et al., 1994). Teachers should have the time to confront held knowledge and consider the possibilities gained from new information. Without considering the mission a school is attempting to achieve, implementation failure is imminent. In order for staff development presentations to be successful, the elements of inquiry and reflection must be considered expected practices.

Pre-assessing whether outcomes of information provided through professional development will elicit successful implementation for a school should be considered by investigating and evaluating conditions regarding personnel and climate (Anderson et al., 1994). Initially, presenters should assess if the school climate supports positive working conditions and school experiences; or, are work conditions stressful ultimately impeding teacher-practitioner motivation and participation for improvement of practice. A second school climate criterion necessary for successful professional development is whether teacher autonomy is evident, or do teachers feel constrained beyond their control. A third factor is for the presenter to determine if teachers want change, and does the school environment support teacher autonomy of those changes. Teachers have an increased probability to experience permanent change through accretion, tuning, and restructuring if attempts to modify instructional practices are correlated to beneficial outcomes (Anderson et al., 1985; Caine & Caine, 1994; Davis, 1999; Denton et al., 2003; Fuchs & Fuchs,

2001; Gennaoui & Kretschmer, 1996; Greenwood & Maheady, 2001; Hamilton & Richardson, 1995; Reutzel & Cooter, 2000; Shanahan & Barr, 1995; Vaughn & Dammann, 2001). If all previous criteria are met, a final determining factor assisting presenters focuses on the quality of school support of community practice. The research relationship between instructional beliefs and implementation-to-practice suggests teacher beliefs and held theories necessitate exploration: increasing success in presenting, modifying, and implementing changes to approaches. In-depth research of the school climate and teacher-practitioner needs prior to dissemination of information are necessary for implementation and sustained growth. Consultants assist teachers with bridging the gap between tacit knowledge and classroom experience through the process of inquiry. Inquiry allows teachers to examine held beliefs while investigating reading instructional problems in an atmosphere of assistance. A study conducted by McCutchen and others investigated how professional development assists teachers' evolving knowledge of beginning literacy in regard to learning disabilities and effective instruction (McCutchen et al., 2002). The authors recruited forty-four kindergarten and first grade teachers by letter invitation for a two-week institute training of explicit instruction focusing on phonological and orthographic awareness. Teachers were initially evaluated by the *Informal Survey of Linguistic Knowledge* developed in 1994 by Moats. After the two-week institute, classroom observations of the teachers elicited three findings. Teacher knowledge of phonological and orthographic information can deepen pedagogical beliefs depending on the *quality* of professional development. Teachers' practice can change if the belief expanding knowledge

is cyclic: with the probability one element of instructional practice is contained within the cycle. Finally, changes in classroom practices and teacher knowledge can improve student learning. The corollary factors between teacher knowledge and implementation of instructional practice is paramount to increasing the possibility for student achievement; and, presenters should consider outcomes quality assistance could offer educators through modifying the presentation of disseminating information.

Professional development often, unfortunately, fails to elicit information in a style leading to implementation (Feist, 2003). A case study involving ten interviews was conducted with on-line technology instructors in an effort to yield rationales for success, or failure, of professional development using a collaborative model. Prior to the professional development, instructors revealed interest to the researchers on participating in opportunities that (a) matched adult learning styles, (b) had a curriculum focus, (c) included guided leadership and a support person, (d) considered limited time schedules, (e) included follow-up sessions and procedures, and (f) the topic was related and centered on current projects. The barrier of greatest concern for professional development elicited from the teacher-practitioner interviews was the element of time: time to attend the professional development, time to practice, uncompensated time, and limited time to assimilate information into existing classroom situations. Active learning, follow-up procedures, conscientious instruction using adult learning styles, curriculum as the focus, and clear leadership direction were additional necessary factors for successful professional development emerging from the case study interviews. What evolved from the case study was a collaborative model

encompassing a five-stage process based on the needs of the instructors. The first stage, the *planning phase*, consisted of an overview of presentation factors including identifying procedures and activities. During this phase, information regarding tasks timelines, roles, compensation, goals, materials, support, and responsibilities are discussed and decided with stakeholders. The second stage*, course and instructor assessment*, focuses on collecting information regarding attitudes, values, awareness of issues of the instructor in the school by the researcher. The collective information is assessed and mini-workshops are offered to bridge gaps *before* new information is presented. The third stage, *course development*, is the dissemination of information through professional development using the necessary mediums: in Feist's case studies, computers. Guided information regarding both group and independent needs is facilitated, and one-on-one tutorials are conducted, if needed. Stage four of the collaborative model is the *course review*. A review of activities and outcomes are stated as well as any corrections to presented material. Student feedback and instructor beliefs regarding the level of success of the professional development are offered at this time. An evaluation of the presentation of the dissemination of information through the professional development is given as well. The final stage of the collaborative model is *preparation of teaching*. The facilitator works with each instructor in preparation for the teaching of the class using the disseminated information.

Peer Coaching as a Source of Literacy Knowledge

Whether entire faculties or two professionals work together, peer coaching is designed for educators willingly assisting others in the pursuit of meeting the

needs of all students (Robbins, 1991; Showers, 1996; Swafford, 1998). Teachers frequently peer-team for projects when common concerns exist (Gennaoui & Kretschmer, 1996). Teachers who have had experience teaching diverse student populations from a systemic approach are more successful at assisting other reading teachers (Foorman & Moats, 2004). Studies have shown peer coaching, as a medium for regular teacher seminars, increases teacher implementation of instructional practices (Showers, 1996). In *Teacher Quality: A Report on the Preparation of Public School Teacher* provided by the National Center for Education Statistics website, teacher-practitioners were more likely to express improvement of instruction compared to teacher-practitioners who had not participated in collaborative activities (USDE, 1999). Effective peer coaching stipulates particular considerations ensuring success. Initially, technical support, modeling and feedback are needed areas of expertise with an interlocking reflection component for effective peer coaching. Reflection and fine-tuning are often cyclic processes. Rodgers (2002) illuminates four problems associated with the necessary components of reflection in regard to modifying teaching practice through peer collaboration. Terminology differences regarding the definition of *reflection* are an initial obstacle. Reflection is a specialized type of thought process not consistently defined in the education community increasing the difficulty of idea conveyance. Although some teachers use journals as mediums, evidence of reflection is not apparent. Perception of what reflection-outcomes entail, vary by individual creating uncertainty of interpretation of observed practices. A third problem focuses on the critical component in which reflection lacks coherent boundaries inhibiting discussions regarding steps and

procedures for all purposes. Instructional actions are neither easily defined, nor easily observed convoluting descriptions which are difficult to convey. The concluding factor dwells in the answer to the effects of reflection since outcomes cannot be ascertained if what is observed is not clearly defined. Clearly, reflection is an individualized assessment of thought judgment: Reflection is not easily conveyed by teacher-practitioners, or readily observed by others.

An environment supportive of cyclic investigation of teaching and organizational change is needed in education (Showers, 1996). Peer coaching is not a vehicle to assess and evaluate teacher performance. Educators as *critical friends* assist instruction only in an environment cognizant of the necessitating and facilitating collaborative relationships (Peterson, 2003). It is essential administrators are considered a part of the professional development team as participants (Denton et al., 2003). Additionally, for selected teachers to be classified as *expert* to return to schools to disseminate information has not worked: Designating expert teachers employed within any individual school has not been considered a successful route to knowledge disbursement. The suggestion of hierarchy is suggested with teacher comparisons for only a designated few to be considered *experts*.

Collaboration is a successful key to creating opportunities for equal dissemination of information. Peer coaching implementation is a complex process due to the nature of change in social relationships among personnel (Showers, 1996). Merely organizing study teams or peer coaching coterie has not proven to influence student achievement (Matlock, Billingsley, Lynch, Haring, & Boer, 1991). Establishing a trusting climate, collaborating in sessions, and reflecting of the continued process are necessary stages to peer coachings'

success. Additionally, for peer coaching to be successful, the school climate of teachers and administrators should be committed to the process (Showers, 1996). Addressing issues (e.g., central office hierarchies, plan-to-action strategies, prioritizing projects, and eliminating workload duplication) are necessary to assist teachers in planning and assessing of practice for student achievement (Peterson, 2003). Providing structure to climates of trust for investigation is a conduit to teacher expertise acquisition. Showers conveys several amended considerations through a decade of investigations ensuring success of peer coaching in an collaborative effort with professional development within a school's environment, including (a) all teachers participating in peer coaching groupings agree to implement the practice selected, support each other with implementation of the new practice, and collect data from the implementation process and documentation of student achievement; (b) elimination of verbal feedback in peer coaching to avoid conflict; and (c) defining *peer coach* by stating the *coach* is the one teaching and the *coached* is the one observing. Additionally, Showers cites recommendations for peer coaching sessions. Time during sessions to address problems of curriculum planning is essential for teachers to understand where, when, and how implementation of an instructional practice might occur. The visioning process assists teachers in comparing information disseminated in collaborative settings in analyzing literacy instructional perceptions, actions, and student outcomes allowing for modification to theoretical beliefs (Squires & Bliss, 2004). Secondly, the formation of teams on the first session day allows all teachers to begin at the same point of reference in communication. Finally, provide examples of what successful

collaboration might entail. Working relationships are complex and frequently need facilitating when empowerment of autonomy through critical analysis is to be achieved. Peer coaching's goals must be investigating instruction and developing and planning the curriculum (Showers, 1996).

The Internet as a Source of Literacy Knowledge

Teachers who feel isolated within a school's climate are given the opportunity to exchange instructional planning for reading ideas via the Internet allowing for collaboration of individuals with shared passions (Serim & Koch, 1996). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2005), 82% of public schools had offered professional development for teacher-practitioners in using the Internet to access curriculum needs. The Internet is utilized by teachers as a source providing relatively effortlessly obtained information alleviating isolation perceptions to some degree while improving instructional confidence (Honey & Henriquez, 1993). Most teacher-practitioners participating in technological investigations use the Internet for instructional design. In a study of teacher Internet usage, findings indicated 76% of the resources teacher-practitioners selected were for lesson plans, 23% for unit plans, and 1% for student activity (Small et al., 1998). Instructional style and strategies were embedded within the searches as well as grouping students and creation dates. Designing instruction was used by 85% of the participants: within this group the most common instructional resources pursued were lesson plans. Small (1998) reported the Internet investigation concluded most educators were apparently seeking information for the purpose of their own classroom instruction and were using the Internet in locating information relative to issues and policies in

education having the potential to ultimately affect implementation and overall instructional planning and implementation.

Compared to the knowledge-dispenser schools of yesterday, teachers today use the Internet to facilitate learning, acquire up-to-date information of students' interests, and collaborate with other educators (Serim & Koch, 1996). Educators around the world share philosophies, theories, and approaches to teaching through the Internet. A learning community develops and educators become rejuvenated sharing enthusiasm about education. The Internet is useful for collaborating on projects, contacting experts, and retrieving real-world research and experience. Online collaboration allows educators to form strong common goals and bonds in which creation of educational products and reflection of practices and ideas are shared. According to the *Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS)* produced by the U.S. State Department of Education (2007), teacher-practitioners spend an average 52.8 hours on teaching and all other-related activities weekly. According to Serim and Koch (1996), the Internet provides an alternative professional development: One based on teachers' instructional needs and time issues.

Educators are reportedly utilizing the Internet for three primary reasons: planning for instruction, encouraging others, and experiencing vicarious teacher-moments. Sharing lesson plans decreases time teachers expend to planning. While acquiring access to prepared plans possibly eases teacher stress and time extension, educators should be advised similar student populations and classroom conditions should be considered before implementing other teachers' lessons. Secondly, teachers encourage other teachers in publishing plans.

Current interest in classroom diagnostic-type experiments has afforded teachers the opportunity to provide other educators with insights to methods, procedures, and approach pitfalls and successes. Finally, the Internet provides a *view* into other teachers' classrooms (Serim & Koch, 1996). Teachers can reflect on present classroom population and consider the possibility if another teachers' approach might work through the visioning process. The addition of the Internet into the classroom experience has had the potential to broaden knowledge. An Internet study by Honey and Henriquez (1993) indicated three conclusions exist regarding educators use of the Internet: (a) educators who use the Internet act as facilitators to other teachers, (b) two thirds plus of those surveyed reported the Internet makes a difference in their teaching practice, and (c) three incentives for using the Internet were expanding student knowledge, information access, and student inquiry skills. The Internet is another avenue teachers have available to acquire information regarding reading instruction; however, caution regarding purpose and source should be considered.

While providing quick access supplying details to larger bodies of knowledge, the Internet is not a reliable substitute for interactions with other teachers or for quick overview of topics (Serim & Koch, 1996). The source of information should be considered before deciding if knowledge is necessarily usable and credible to a teacher's current classroom situation. Locating valid sources requires teachers to become research-educators pursuing information based on existing beliefs and present educational concerns.

Concluding Thoughts

Presently, educators daily confront politically-geared issues through educational mandates in direct conflict with teacher autonomy daily. Legislation and initiatives at local, state, and federal levels propel changes on educational institutions designed to maintain cultural stability. Public schools have historically responded to societal changes without due haste and rarely anticipate emanate change (Gorton & Schneider, 1991). The perplexing issue of curriculum control by government policy or teacher expertise is distending from *what* is taught to encapsulating *how* the *what* is taught (Davis, 1999; Shepherd & Ragan, 1992). On April 28, 1998, Reid Lyon elucidated current federal venue on the issue of educators' expertise to the Committee on Labor and Human Resources stating, "Teachers and administrators are conflicted regarding the *how to* of reading: how to teach and how to help students having difficulty". All stakeholders are valued in the pursuit for educational ends; however, individuals in direct contact with the source only possess the various, inordinate factors involved in teaching both individual's and group's needs. According to the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (2004), teachers plan instruction based on abilities and needs of students. Ethical diversity in the American public school system has assisted in the awareness of student-centered approaches; however, the need for individual assessment and planning has always been prevalent and eventually recognized in1975 by Public Law 94-142. Students should be centerpieces for planning reading instruction; additionally, individual instruction is necessary for some students for certain concepts and needs (Reutzel & Wolfersberger, 1996). Diagnostic teaching is the

action of teachers designing literacy instruction focusing on students' needs. Consecutive procedures of assessing, instructing, diagnostic hypothesis, diagnostic lessons, assessing of growth, evaluating, modifying, and recycling are components of student-centered instruction classified as diagnostic teaching (Walker, 1988).

Balance of literacy approaches, philosophies, or programs is often supported, or possibly nullified, through various school and teacher factors. Five areas of considerations for dissemination of teacher-based practices are derived from (a) literature recommended practices, (b) school ethos, (c) school practices and belief systems, and (d) staff development (Richardson, 1994). Recommendations for instructional practices are included in most current teacher editions, reading programs, and educational journals; however, the relationship to research, theory, and practice are not explicated. Educators may overgeneralize, or negate, recommendations of literacy recommendations if viewed as inappropriate or unusable to present classroom assignment. The issues of *wait time* in which teacher-practitioners allow the idea to *time out* and revert to previous practice is a typical outcome of educators not provided the theory behind the recommended practice (Anderson et al., 1994; Greenwood & Abbott, 2001). Investigating preferred sources and frequency of literacy knowledge among teacher-practitioners may elicit information providing research-educators in the education field with a broader vision of teachers' instructional needs.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Chapter III provides instrument details, researcher materials and procedures, and data analyses through qualitative and quantitative methods. This chapter comprises six-delineated sections. The first section, *Introduction*, explicates abbreviated purpose and procedural rationale utilizing a mixed-method design. The second section, *Research Design*, delineates information apropos of mixed-method selection as well as rationales for questionnaire research. The third section, *Instrument*, categorically presents this study's design through a detailed description of instrument, participants, and strategies for questionnaire return rate. The fourth section, *Procedures*, sequentially outlines researcher-action regarding data collection to complete this study. *Data Analysis* details variables, research question, how the instrument's results were statistically evaluated, and what defines descriptive data for the purpose of this study. Additionally, this section describes how question items were quantified in regard to both method-type and limits. The sixth and final section of this chapter, *Ethical Considerations*, outlines the responsibility of the researcher within the university's learning community to protect participants' anonymity while a part of this study. The purpose of this study was to investigate perceived reliable sources of reading instruction knowledge measured on years of experience and grade level designations of Kindergarten, First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth grade teacher-practitioners.

Introduction

Historically, an abundant amount of research exists related to reading instruction (Shannon & Goodman, 1994). Information gleaned from research typically fails to be utilized by teacher-practitioners according to various investigators based on numerous concerns: lack of trust in educational findings' usefulness by comparison to other professional occupations' research, restricted view of research breadth and purpose, determination if specific research is applicable to classroom situations, limited support by school personnel to investigate alternative solutions to classroom issues, linear decided staff development topics, and teacher beliefs and values regarding frequency and quality of instructional change (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson,1985; Davis, 1999; Denton, Vaughn, & Fletcher, 2003; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2001; Gennaoui & Kretschumer, 1996; Greenwood & Maheady, 2001). This study's questionnaire was designed to investigate which sources of information were perceived reliable to teacher-practitioners through investigating frequency in acquiring reading instruction knowledge from available, school-site sources. Although many sources exist allowing educators to procure a vast broadcast of instructional knowledge, teacher-practitioners decide to either utilize information readily available and accepted within the school culture, or not at all (Caine & Caine, 1994; Hamilton & Richardson, 1995; Shanahan & Barr, 1995; Vaughn & Dammann, 2001). Numerous self and grouping opportunities exist within school instructional programs designed to assist teacher-practitioners with acquiring reading instruction knowledge (Cibulka & Nakayama, 2000; Gorton & Schneider, 1991). Peer, administration, and community learning sources are present for

teacher-practitioners to utilize if the school climate supports an atmosphere of shared learning through norms, attitudes, and beliefs (Ballantine, 1993; Klinger et al., 1999; Swafford, 1998). With the focus on teacher-practitioners' responses accurately reflecting adroitness and prosaic familiarity within the academic community, this investigation probed the value of expertise and frequency confined by situation necessity regarding reading instruction knowledge. With consideration to teacher-practitioner regard to school ethos and teaching culture, this study was designed to investigate preferred sources of reading instruction knowledge among Kindergarten, First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth grade teacher-practitioners. Specifically, the research question under investigation was to determine if statistically significant differences existed among perceived reliable sources (i.e., Peer Teacher, Professional Development, School Administrator, or Internet) of reading instruction knowledge among grade designations (i.e., Kindergarten-First, Second-Third, and Fourth-Fifth) in relation to years of teaching experience (i.e., 0 - 8 years, 9 - 18 years, and 19 + years) of teacher-practitioners for classroom instructional procedures identified by the United States Department of Education.

Research Design

A mixed-method, explanatory approach was employed for the investigation using parametric and reliability analyses for data and questionnaire comments of 309 participants and 16 interview responses of Kindergarten, First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth grade elementary teacher-practitioners. In Phase 1, quantitative data was analyzed through a 3 X 3 Factorial MANOVA. In Phase II, qualitative data was explored through open coding.

Phase I: Quantitative Methods

In order to investigate sources teachers perceive as reliable for reading instruction information, a 19-item researcher questionnaire was administered. Initially, three experts were solicited to review the questionnaire for aesthetics, appropriateness, and clarity. Using the Cronbach Reliability Test, a pilot study was employed to analyze if combined items' sub-scores were reliably correlated. Outcomes and results of the Experts and Pilot Study are incorporated in Chapter IV. In order to field-test the analyzed data retrieved from questionnaires, a 3 X 3 Factorial Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was used to ascertain if sources of reading information among teacher-practitioners on the measures of years of teaching experience and grade level designations were statistically different. Finally, a random selection of teacher-practitioners was asked if the researcher could schedule an interview to further investigate rationales reported from outcome data.

In selecting a research design to investigate teacher-perceived confidence of sources and motivation in acquiring reading instruction knowledge, criteria to be used in this study consisted of describing trends for people and populations. For the purpose of this study, the population consisted of teacher-practitioners in a state in the southeastern, continental United States. Specifically, a random sample of certified Kindergarten, First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth grade teacher-practitioners were asked to respond to a voluntary questionnaire investigating perceived confidence in sources of information regarding reading instruction knowledge. Based on this analytical focus, reliable data through quantitative analysis was the primary research design employed concurrent with

one-to-one interviews of open-ended questions from a representative sample of this study's targeted population (Creswell, 2002). Within confounds of sampling error, survey research is accurate. For the purpose of initial exploratory and explanatory research, survey through questionnaire yields information determining if further investigation is warranted. An opinion survey assists describing concerns of targeted groups, describing beliefs and needs of the target population, and compares groups which are geographically dispersed (Creswell, 2002; Glass & Hopkins, 1996; Hoy & Sabo, 1998). Additional qualitative data, as defined as descriptive statistics, consisted of detailing this study's participant pool of candidates selected. Demographic information (i.e., years of teaching experience, present teaching position, certification, and educational degree status) was also requested on the questionnaire.

Advantages to survey research are anonymity, awareness of issues revealed to participants through question items, and preliminary insights for further investigations. Kerlinger and Lee (2000) assert survey research has not been used to a great extent in education even though theoretical and practical value lends itself to the availability. One qualifying advantage of survey research includes *wide scope* dimensions: Large populations are investigated more economically with survey research as opposed to field experiments, field studies, and laboratory experiments (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). Teacher groups investigated are often located within a general area allowing convenient access for researchers as well as additional necessary follow-up. Assessing attitudes, social and personal facts, beliefs, and opinions are best suited for survey research: Individuals are more likely to disclose information when choices are

given allowing participants to voice opinions anonymously for critical analysis without fear of retribution. Although various needs-assessments survey global views, instruction-related issues have been administered within individual schools and school districts. An instrument specifically focusing on sources for teacher-practitioners' literacy knowledge following No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation is not presently on the market due to one of five main reasons: lack of instrument validity, lack of instrument reliability, items on survey are global school issues, lack of anonymity, and schools' one-time use pattern of survey feedback (e.g., Academic Setting Evaluation Questionnaire, Chicago Effective School Projects: The Needs Assessment Instrument, Profiling Teacher Development Programs: An Approach to Formative Evaluation, Inventory of Teacher Concerns, and U.S. Department of Education's Teacher Survey on Professional Development and Training). An example of questionnaire data aiding organizational process is the Organizational Beliefs Questionnaire (OBQ) created by Marshal Sashkin (1997). The purpose of the OBQ questionnaire is to ascertain employee beliefs essential in enhancing long-term performance goals. According to the OBQ, 50 measurable items are investigated in the OBQ in which participants respond to ranked items selecting 1 (*strongly agree)* to 5 (*strongly disagree)*. Data are provided to managers identifying values impeding progress and enhancing supportive beliefs for optimal performance of employees. Information yielded from the questionnaire is used to adjust performance areas for employees in acquiring higher quality production. Employees express concerns regarding company goals without reprimand due to anonymity and with the belief management is interested about the production

climate. School-surveys assist teacher-practitioners, similar to the OBQ, if data gleaned from the instrument is correlated to instructional needs for student achievement.

There are three readily identifiable disadvantages to survey research of which social scientists should be cognizant. Deeply imbedded issues may not surface in survey research. Surveys generally provide extensive, not intensive, information. Secondly, energy, time, and money are additional disadvantages of survey research. In order to solicit a significant quantity of population for data analysis, the copying, mailing, and follow-up procedures for survey studies requires researchers to identify and implement conscientiously coordinated methods. Finally, developing items and knowledge of target audience prevent some researchers' ease of acquiring information needed for investigations (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). Even though the targeted population is in a unified location, teacher-practitioners often prioritize free time at school preparing for instruction. Additional time asked from teachers for research is often viewed as an unnecessary constraint. A competent survey investigator researches topic knowledge for participant interest. Additionally, posing sampling dimensions, considering factors in wording of questions and how statements should be constructed, and selecting appropriate analysis of data are necessary for extracting responses from participants.

Reliability and parametric tests were used to analyze the quantitative data from the researcher-created questionnaire. Cronbach alpha analyzed if sub-scores possessed internal consistency for survey reliability from generated data within sets of statements for the pilot study. Statements 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5

poised vignettes focused on confidence frequency acquired for *peer teachers* in disaggregating information regarding reading instruction procedural knowledge. Statements 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 poised vignettes focused on confidence frequency acquired for *professional development* in disaggregating information regarding reading instruction procedural knowledge. Statements 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 poised vignettes focused on confidence frequency acquired for *the Internet* in disaggregating information regarding reading instruction procedural knowledge. Statements 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20 poised vignettes focused on confidence frequency acquired for *school administrators* in disaggregating information regarding reading instruction procedural knowledge. Interviews with randomly selected participants followed data analyses.

Participants

The participants for the field study were elementary teacher-practitioners in public schools located in a state in the southeastern region of the continental United States. Engaging the participant entails a series of steps. The initial step was to identify the Kindergarten, First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth grade teacher-practitioners using only public schools within the target state. From the overall returned mail-out, approximately 270 questionnaires was attempted to be solicited resulting in 309 total qualifying questionnaires.

Instrument

The researcher-created instrument was initially subjected to experts' assessments before distributing the questionnaire to the target population of Kindergarten, First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth grade teacher-practitioners. Necessary adjustments suggested by experts to the questionnaire were made

prior to field-test. A pilot study consisting of 18 graduate students within the university setting followed any needed adjustment to the questionnaire. The outcome of the Cronbach Reliability Test resulted in the 20-item questionnaire adjustment to 19-items. The purpose of the pilot study was to analyze reliability of sub-scores of sets of statements and further adjust verbiage, if necessary, before field testing the questionnaire. In order to investigate the research question of this study, the 19-item researcher-created questionnaire designed for certified Kindergarten, First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth grade instructors assessing perceived reliable sources of reading instruction information was mailed to teacher-practitioners throughout the state in which access was granted through local and state school officials.

The 19-item questionnaire explored certified Kindergarten, First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth grade teacher-practitioners' perception of reliable sources for reading instruction knowledge. Kindergarten, First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth grade teacher-practitioners were asked to select the category identifying the frequency the source in the vignette provided supplied reliable reading instruction knowledge information. Answers to items were Likert-type scaled as 1 (*always)*, 2 (*frequently),* 3 (*occasionally)*, 4 (*rarely)*, and 5 (*never)*. Certain principles apply to Likert-type scales (Rea & Parker, 1997). One of the principles states instrument-designers allow for the quantity of possible choices extends from two to ten. This offers the participant more than one choice, but not too many. For example item two states, "Peer teachers are a reliable source of information in determining what instructional procedures should be used for reading instruction." Participants circled the frequency as to which represented

the closest feeling to belief. Additionally, participants identified how strongly, positively or negatively, the choice is considered (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). A second consideration addresses the need for the questions, or statements, to be theme-consistent: assessing one issue throughout. From an analysis perspective, a common theme assists in assuring the researcher that what is being examined is not convoluted with superfluous ideas for the participant. For the purpose of this study, the theme of the investigation was reliability through frequency of pursuing reading instruction knowledge from stated sources. Sources of information for teacher-practitioners were selected based on an extensive research as provided in Chapter II. Peer teachers, professional development, the Internet, and school administrators are sources teachers have readily available on school-site when questions and concerns emerge regarding reading instruction procedural knowledge. Furthermore, each source was presented within a series of consecutive vignettes throughout the questionnaire as opposed to disjointed. For example, statements 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 focused on *peer teachers* as reliable sources reading instruction procedural information. Statements 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 focused on *professional development* as a reliable source of reading instruction procedural information. Statements 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 focused on the *Internet* as a reliable source of reading instruction procedural information. Statements 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20 focused on *school administrators* as a source of reliable reading instruction procedural information. Additionally, each source's set of statements addressed procedures stipulated by the U.S. Department of Labor (2008) as necessary for teachers: planning, instructing, and assessing. For example, the first statement for each source-set

(i.e., 1, 6, 11, and 16) addressed the reliability of information for teacher-practitioners for *planning* for reading instruction. The second set of statements numbered as 2, 7, 12, and 17 addressed *instruction* for each source. The third set of statements numbered as 3, 8, 13, and 18 addressed *student assessment* for each source. The fourth set of statements numbered as 4, 9, 14, and 19 addressed *planning* for each source. The fifth set of statements numbered as 5, 10, 15, and 20 addressed *planning* for each source. The researcher-created instrument's primary investigation was focused on sources of information provided to teacher-practitioners in order to make decisions for instruction: more statements focused on *planning*. Grouping the vignettes regarding source in sets assisted the participants in focusing on the topic instead of dwelling on what the instrument was attempting to assess. Additionally, the scale of the instrument was logical to the questions, or statements, asked. The instrument portrays clarity in what the researcher wanted to investigate. For example, question or statement items of frequency paralleled word choices such as *never*, *sometimes*, and *always* indicating how much or how often. Finally, the scale must have a logical order with a high-end to low-end effect (e.g., *always*, *occasionally,* or *never*). In terms of degree of feeling, this allowed participants to continue the instrument confident of the order of the response range. Further information regarding the definitions used in describing groups and terminology are located in Chapter I under the heading of *terms*.

Questionnaire Administration and Return

Questionnaires were mailed to each participating elementary school. Principals were advised through letter directive (Appendix B) to allow

teacher-practitioners to voluntarily complete the questionnaires in order to deter Orne's subject predisposition effects (Orne,1962). Principals were assigned a return date of two weeks after receiving the questionnaires. After all teacher-practitioners completed the instrument, or on the return date, questionnaires were returned to the researcher by self-addressed, return envelope.

Questionnaire Coding

After questionnaires were received, each was assigned a code based on the independent measures indicated in the demographics section. Years of experience were coded as either 0 – 8, 9 – 18, or 19 +. Grade level designations were coded as either K – 1, 2 – 3, or 4 – 5. Each questionnaire was assigned years of experience range and a grade level designation. For example, a fifth grade teacher with five years of experience was coded as 0 – 8 / 4 – 5. After questionnaires were assigned a group, and unqualified or incomplete questionnaires were purged, consecutive numerical numbers were assigned in order to identify the questionnaires by case for the purpose of analysis.

Purged Questionnaires

Questionnaires were purged from the study based on four initial factors: non-qualifying demographics, incomplete questionnaires, the return of re-mailed questionnaires from schools original submission, and random selection of questionnaires in cells greater than the 1.5% range between lowest and highest cell: One cell was decreased by ten to accommodate the 1.5% difference as recommended by Hair et al. (1998). The questionnaire was designed for certified, state-licensed teacher-practitioners. If a

teacher-practitioner failed to indicate certification, or no certification, the questionnaire was removed from the study prior to analysis. If a teacher-practitioner failed to answer all of the questions, the questionnaire was removed from the study prior to analysis. Schools returning less than 50% of the teacher-practitioner participants were re-mailed the questionnaire for the second mailing. Upon the completion and return of questionnaires from re-mails, if the quantity was greater than the first mail-outs to the individual schools then the total set of questionnaires from the first mailing were discarded. All re-mails resulted in greater participant numbers as compared to the first mail-out. The first mail-outs of questionnaires from schools to be re-mailed were discarded.

Data Analysis

Variables

Descriptive data in the form of status variables (i.e., years of teaching experience intervals, grade level intervals, and degree status) are reported in addition to results of the parametric and reliability tests within Chapter IV. Status variables cited under *Demographic Information* on the questionnaire included (a) years of classroom experience (i.e., 0 - 8 years, 9 - 18 years, 19 + years), (b) present teaching position (i.e., Kindergarten, First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth grade teacher-practitioners), (c) highest educational degree (i.e., Bachelor, Master's, Specialist's, Doctorate, or Other), and (d) whether the participant possessed a certified state teacher's license. Measured variables in the 19 - item researcher-created questionnaire consisted of individual statements focused on a source of reading instruction knowledge and the frequency information was pursued from stated source. Items 1 - 19 measured source

selection among Peer Teacher, Professional Development, School Administrator, and Internet of Kindergarten, First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth grade teacher-practitioners regarding reading instruction procedural knowledge. Items 1 to 19 measured frequency in Likert-type scaled as 1 (*always*), 2 (*frequently*), 3 (*occasionally*), 4 (*rarely*), or 5 (*never*) among Kindergarten, First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth grade teacher-practitioners.

Random sampling was a necessary assumption to be met with a Factorial MANOVA. In order to satisfy random sampling criteria for a Factorial MANOVA, several procedures were implemented. The opportunity to participate in the investigation was presented to all school districts within the state of study. District superintendents, permitting contact with principals, did not control whether the individual schools participated in the study, or not: Principals had the opportunity to decline to participate in the study. Once questionnaires were mailed to the individual schools, teacher-practitioners could elect to complete a questionnaire, or not. Questionnaires were categorized according to a grouping variable after which an equivalent number of participants were to be selected to represent each cell in order to realize approximately 270 questionnaires from the total number of responses retrieved in an approximate five week time frame; however, in order to maintain an adequate sample size, only one cell was decreased in order to achieve an adequate sample size and a 1.5% difference between the lowest and highest cell. After receiving all completed, qualified questionnaires, a total sample size included 309 participants.

Analysis of Research Question

The research question for this study investigated if there was a statistically significant difference in perceived reliable sources of reading instruction information among teacher-practitioners on the measures of years of educator experience and grade designations. The independent variables were grade designations (i.e., Kindergarten - First, Second - Third, and Fourth - Fifth) and years of teaching experience (i.e., 0 - 8 years, 9 - 18 years, and 19 + years). The intervals for the years were derived from a study conducted by The National Center for Education Statistics' investigation of attrition and mobility of teachers for the 2004 - 05 academic year (2007). The grade designation factors were implanted to increase power in the data analysis. The dependent variables for this study were the sources of reading instruction for procedural knowledge (i.e., peer teachers, professional development, the Internet, and school administrators).

The 19-item researcher-created questionnaire was divided into groups of vignettes for each source. Statements 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 investigated *peer teachers* as reliable sources of reading instruction procedural knowledge for teacher-practitioners. Statements 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 investigated *professional development* as a reliable source of reading instruction procedural knowledge for teacher-practitioners. Statements 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 investigated *the Internet* as a reliable source of reading instruction procedural knowledge for teacher-practitioners. Statements 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20 investigated *school administrators* as reliable sources of reading instruction procedural knowledge for teacher-practitioners. Cronbach alpha analyzed each set of vignettes to

retrieve a sub-score testing for internal consistency for data reliability from the survey of the correlation between statements. A Cronbach alpha consists of 0 to 1 with .6 and .7 accepted as reliable lower limits. The subgroups for each set (i.e., Q1-5, Q6-10, Q11-15, and Q16-20) were analyzed using a Factorial MANOVA with alpha level set at .05 to test for statistically significant differences in sources (i.e., peer teachers, professional development, Internet, and school administrators). The functions of a factorial MANOVA test dependent variables for all grouping levels (SPSS, 2006). For the purpose of this study, two grouping levels consisted of grade designations (i.e., Kindergarten - First, Second - Third, and Fourth - Fifth) and years of teaching experience (i.e., 0 - 8 years, 9 - 18 years, and 19 + years) as the independent variables. If the multivariate interaction was significant for the Factorial MANOVA, factorial univariate effects were interpreted and graphed to illuminate where interaction exists. If the multivariate interaction computed was not significant, the univariate main effects were examined. If any main effects were significant, post hoc tests for multiple comparisons of observed means were employed to determine which groups were significantly different from other groups. A Factorial MANOVA allows for comparable ends eliciting relatively valid results if participating groups are not normally distributed through statistical tests of the homogeneity of variance assumption (e.g., Levene's, Bartlett-Box, Cochran's C, etc.). According to Hair et al., violation of homogeneity of variance can be stabilized if cell sizes are within a 1.5% difference (Hair et al., 1998).

Phase II: Qualitative Methods

In order to add depth to this study, the second phase of this investigation encompassed interviews with participant teacher-practitioners and investigation of comments supplied on the questionnaire in order to offer possible explanations of quantitative results. Surveys are often combined with alternate forms of investigation (e.g., interviews, documents, field-notes, different individuals) in order to confirm responses and explore rationales through the process of explanatory dimension (Creswell, 2002). Interviews, when combined with pretested worth, are an indispensable and powerful research tool design yielding dimensional data to the researcher: A face-to-face interaction designed to elicit pertinent information for the research under investigation (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). Although interviews are viewed as an omnipresent form of investigation, information gleaned is used in mainly two specific areas: as an exploratory device and as a supplement to other methods as a follow-up. For the purpose of this mixed-method study, the follow-up interviews were used as a support to the quantitative data findings.

Three main types of existing interview formats with varying degrees of face-to-face interactions are often employed: *structured* or standardized, *unstructured* or non-standardized, and *semi-structured*. Structured, or standardized, interviews elicit closed-ended responses in which the choices of requested possibilities are given to the participant. Unstructured, or non-standardized, interviews are open-ended in which the participant creates the response. A semi-structured interview, for the purpose of this research, incorporated both structured and unstructured responses from the participant.

For example, participants in the semi-structured interview were asked, “Do you have weekly professional development?” A statement or question is considered structured if the choices of the answer are given and require closed-ended responses (e.g., *yes* or *no)*. An additional question was, “Do you feel you have enough time to prepare for changes in reading instruction from within the year or from year-to-year?” Since a creative response was required, the answer would be classified unstructured (Creswell, 2002). Within the framework of semi-structured interviews, open-ended questions were used to examine depth, possibly clarifying answers to responses identifying true intentions behind respondents’ questionnaire choices and exploring possible themes existing within groups of participants. The 12 semi-structured interview questions represented in Table 1 comprised the format the researcher followed.

Table 1

Correlated Interview Questions and Related Research Focus

Interview Question	Research Focus
1. Do you have the opportunity to attend district-offered staff development throughout the year?	1. Is there a statistical difference in perceived reliable sources of reading instruction information among teacher-practitioners based on years of teaching experience and grade designation?
2. Is your school currently focusing on a reading-based program?	
3. When do you receive your students' standardized test scores?	
4. Do you attend any professional teachers' conferences during the summer?	
5. How do you learn about updates and legislative changes regarding reading instruction (e.g., No Child Left Behind)?	
6. What do you feel is the most influential reason to seek information about reading instruction?	
7. How do you feel about the way you teach reading?	
8. How much time do you spend teaching reading daily?	
9. Do you teach reading daily?	
10. Do you have weekly grade-level meetings to discuss reading instruction?	
11. Do you have weekly professional development offered at the school?	

Table 1 (continued).

Interview Question	Research Focus
12. What topics presented at professional development do you find most helpful regarding literacy?	
13. Do you have access to the Internet at school?	

Identifying Interview Participants

Participants were randomly selected through a random numbers table. The state selected for the study was segmented in to three regions: southern, central, and northern as designated by two major highways relatively segmenting the state by three approximate regions. Participating schools within each region were listed in alphabetical order. Numbers were generated to encompass the total amount of schools in each list. For example in the southern region five districts volunteered to participate in this study; therefore, numbers 1 to 5 were generated. A number from the generated numbers was randomly selected. The third district in the southern list was identified for the interview phase. Schools within the district were identified and subjected to the random numbers table process as described. Each region was subjected to a random numbers table procedure: One school was randomly selected for the southern region, one school was randomly selected for the central region, and two schools were randomly selected for the northern region of the state. Principals were informed in a letter (Appendix B) participating schools may randomly selected for the interview phase.

Analyzing Comments and Interview Responses

Questionnaire comments. After incomplete or non-qualifying questionnaires were purged, questionnaire comments were classified by the findings of the quantitative phase. The quantitative phase identified a main effect for an independent variable; therefore, comments were segmented by that variable. Using the outcome revealed in the quantitative phase, open coding was employed investigating the questionnaire comments in order to identify support of the finding.

Interview responses. The researcher interviewed 16 teacher-practitioners. The interviews were concurrent with questionnaire completion. Teacher-practitioners were working staff development days preparing schools for summer: Students had been dismissed for the academic year. Due to the unavailability of teacher-practitioners at two of the schools, the researcher randomly interviewed teacher-practitioners at one of the schools and interviewed teachers available at the other. Teacher-practitioners were randomly selected at the two remaining schools. After responses were collected, an open coding process was used to identify support for the quantitative finding. Responses were translated to narrative form provided in Chapter IV.

Summary of Procedures

Prior to data collection in the field, permission from the Institutional Human Subjects Review Board of The University of Southern Mississippi was obtained (Appendix C). Survey research conducted by mail assessing social beliefs traditionally demonstrate a low response rate of approximately 50% (Creswell, 2002; Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). In order to aggrandize the return rate of the

questionnaire, several before and after procedures were utilized. The results of the two mail-outs are located in Chapter IV. Initially, a proactive approach suggested by Creswell on the part of the investigator suggests selecting a topic appealing to the target teacher-population among certified Kindergarten, First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth grade teacher-practitioners (Creswell, 2002). This researcher-created instrument investigated perceived reliable sources of information for reading instruction knowledge. Teachers have the opportunity to collect information from both mandated and alternative avenues for guiding reading instruction knowledge, implementation, assessment and evaluation. For the purpose of this study, data collection for the field-test entailed eight procedural actions.

1. Request to district superintendents for permission to contact school principals- (Appendix D). Superintendents were contacted two separate times: May and July. An initial invitation to participate in the study was e-mailed to all superintendents in May. A reminder e-mail was sent to superintendents whom had not responded two weeks later (Appendix E). During the summer, a few superintendents contacted the researcher for the opportunity for schools in their district to participate in the study. The instrument was re-mailed (a) in attempt to obtain a sufficient number of participants for the data analysis to be used, and (b) in an attempt to offer the opportunity for the study to districts expressing concern the questionnaire was initially presented to teachers during a high-test interval of the year. Based on these factors, the researcher offered participation in the study through e-mail for a second time in July to all districts that had either had not previously responded, or those expressing interest that

missed the first deadline.

2. Contact with principals of participating schools- (Appendix A) After permission was granted by the superintendent for the investigation, an e-mail highlighting information to be gleaned from the research was e-mailed to each principal of the access-granted schools: If principal e-mails were inaccessible, phone contact was attempted by the researcher to ensure the instrument was welcomed and promoted. Schools were contacted in both May and July.

3. After approval from superintendents and principals, participating schools received a mailed questionnaire packet. Each school's packet contained two items: (a) coversheets (Appendix H) attached to the modified 19-item questionnaire (Appendix F), (b) a separate return-envelope for the questionnaires. The purpose of the coversheet was to assist the researcher in identifying non-respondents in the event resending the questionnaire was necessary in order to attempt a response rate congruent with the power of the study. The coverheet stated an individual teacher's name, the school in which the teacher taught, and directions for completing the questionnaire. After completing the questionnaire, participants were asked to place the questionnaire in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided in the office.

4. Initial responses to packets were collected within a two-to-three week time period as recommended by Rea and Parker (1997). Three weeks allow responding teachers time to complete the questionnaire. Non-respondents have decided not to participate within this time frame, and a completed questionnaire not be mailed back to researcher. Follow-up questionnaires were

mailed at the beginning of the next academic school year having initially mailed at the end of the previous year. The process of follow up through additional contacts continued until a sample of approximately 270 were realized: 309 teacher-practitioners' questionnaires qualified to participate in the study.

5. As the completed questionnaires were returned, the researcher assigned a code categorizing teacher grouping and an ordinal number. For example, when the first teacher-practitioner as defined by the descriptive statistics on the instrument returns the questionnaire, the code assigned at the top consisted of a grade designation grouping level (i.e., K - 1 for Kindergarten - First, 2 - 3 for Second - Third, and 4 - 5 for Fourth - Fifth) and experience grouping level (i.e., 0 – 8 years, 9 – 18 years, and 19 + years). If a questionnaire received had been coded as 0 - 8 years of teaching experience and grade designation of Kindergarten, the code assigned to the questionnaire was coded 0 – 8 / K - 1. Since this instrument was not interested in which county the teachers were employed, no county code was assigned to distinguish differences among the questionnaires. For the purpose of analysis after all questionnaires from all schools were combined, each coded questionnaire was assigned a case number.

6. Concurrent with the distribution and collection of questionnaires, interviews proceeded at randomly selected schools. Initially, the state involved in the study was divided into three geographical regions in order to ensure the opportunity for all areas to have equal opportunity to participate. In order to randomly select destinations for the interview phase, participating elementary schools were alphabetically listed within each geographical region. A random

number was selected for each geographical area, and schools designated within the number sequence were identified. Random numbers to be selected included the maximum number of participating schools in order to ensure equal opportunity. For example if ten schools within a geographical area were identified, the random number grouping would included all numbers from one-to ten. If the number four was randomly revealed, the fourth school in the alphabetical list for the geographical region would have been selected. In order to add breadth and depth to the investigation, interview questions were designed to assess each participant's perception of (a) what sources of information are available, and (b) the usefulness and helpfulness of each source.

7. Confidentiality and anonymity was assured through The Human Subjects Review Board of The University of Southern Mississippi (Appendix C). The confidentiality statement was posted on the questionnaire. As part of the approval from The Human Subjects Review Board of The University of Southern Mississippi, terms of participant anonymity was stated and included as part of this study. School Districts, participants, and any other personal identifying information that may be received purposely or accidentally was changed to pseudonyms to protect confidentiality and anonymity.

8. Researcher security of returned questionnaires will be maintained in a locked filing cabinet for three years as suggested by The Human Subjects Review Board of The University of Southern Mississippi.

Ethical Considerations

In accordance with The Institutional Human Subjects Review Board (IRB) of The University of Southern Mississippi, confidentiality of all participants

involved in this investigation were maintained. Pseudonyms were used to secure the privacy rights of districts, schools, participants, or other personal-identifying information.

Chapter IV

RESULTS

Chapter IV reveals the results and outcomes of the statistical data of the pilot study, the 3 X 3 (i.e., Levels of Years, Levels of Grades) Factorial MANOVA through descriptive statistics and numerical analyses, and responses retrieved from questionnaire comments and interview responses. In Phase I, a 20-item (Appendix G) researcher-created questionnaire was subjected to a pilot study to determine if correlation existed among sub-scores analyzed by the Cronbach Reliability Test. The 3 X 3 Factorial MANOVA analyzed the completed field-test questionnaires to assess if there was a difference in perceived reliable sources (i.e., Peer Teachers, Professional Development, Internet and School Administrators) of reading instruction information among teacher-practitioners (i.e., certified Kindergarten, First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth grade) within the measures of years of experience (i.e., 0 - 8, 9 - 18, and 19 +) and grade level designations (i.e., Kindergarten - First, Second - Third, and Fourth - Fifth). In Phase II, interview responses were used to explain quantitative outcomes of the field test.

Experts

Three university experts in the field of education critiqued the questionnaire for aesthetics, clarity, and appropriateness. Experts approved the aesthetics, clarity, and appropriateness, and the questionnaire proceeded to pilot study phase. Discussion of further issues involving experts' opinions regarding the questionnaire is located within Chapter V.

Phase I: Quantitative Results

Statistical analysis comprised of The Cronbach Reliability Test and a 3 X 3 Factorial MANOVA incorporated Phase1. Demographic information of the field-test participants is provided. Means, standard deviations, and sample size for each source is displayed.

Pilot Study

A 20-item questionnaire was created to assess if items for each source were reliably correlated. Using the Cronbach Reliability test, items were analyzed in order to achieve a reliability score of .6 to 1. An education-related course consisting of graduate students completed the researcher-created questionnaire. Statements 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 investigated peer teachers as a reliable source of reading instruction information. Statements 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 investigated professional development as a reliable source of reading instruction information. Statements 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 investigated the Internet as a reliable source of reading instruction information. Statements 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20 investigated school administrators as reliable sources of reading instruction Information. The Cronbach Reliability test indicated peer teachers (Table 2), professional development (Table 3), and school administrators (Table 4) were reliably correlated (Table 6). Item 15 for Internet was deleted to achieve Cronbach Reliability (Table 6).

Table 2

Peer Teacher Cronbach Reliability

Question	*M*	*SD*	*N*
Q1	3.56	.85559	18
Q2	3.44	.70479	18
Q3	3.22	.80845	18
Q4	3.20	.92355	18
Q5	3.17	.98518	18

Table 3

Professional Development Cronbach Reliability

Question	*M*	*SD*	*N*
Q6	3.17	.70711	18
Q7	2.94	.80237	18
Q8	2.94	.72536	18
Q9	3.44	.51131	18
Q10	2.67	.90743	18

Table 4

School Administrator Cronbach Reliability

Question	*M*	*SD*	*N*
Q16	2.50	.85749	18
Q17	2.20	.85749	18
Q18	2.44	.78591	18
Q19	2.44	.70479	18
Q20	3.00	.97014	18

Table 5

Internet Cronbach Reliability

Question	*M*	*SD*	*N*
Q11	3.11	.58298	18
Q12	2.78	.64676	18
Q13	2.56	.70479	18
Q14	3.33	.68599	18
Q15	2.38	1.03690	18

Table 6

Cronbach Reliability of Sources

Source	*M*	Variance	*SD*	*N* of items	*α*
PT[a]	16.89	13.63	8.82	5	.910
PD[b]	15.17	9.79	3.13	5	.898
I[c]	14.17	3.68	1.91	5	.624
SA[d]	13.28	9.51	3.08	5	.786

Note: Source indicates dependent variables.
[a]PT indicates Peer Teacher; [b]PD indicates Professional Development;
[c]I indicates the Internet; and [d]SA indicates School Administrators.

Item-total statistics (Table 7) reported if item 15 investigating the Internet as a reliable source of *what objectives* to teach was removed, Cronbach reliability would be achieved (Table 5). Removing item 15 increased α =.30 to α =.624 within reliable limits. Cronbach analysis' outcome necessitated removing item 15: The 20-item questionnaire was reduced by one item to become a 19-item Questionnaire (Appendix F). Further discussion regarding the elimination of the original item 15 is located in Chapter V.

Table 7

Item-Total Statistics of Internet

Question	Mean if Item Deleted	Variance if Item Deleted	Cronbach Alpha if Item Deleted
Q11	11.06	2.53	.034
Q12	11.39	2.84	.215
Q13	11.61	2.72	.205
Q14	10.83	2.50	.091
Q15	11.78	3.24	.624

District and School Contacts

Permission from the state superintendent of education was received in April 2009. Superintendents were contacted collectively by e-mail in May 2009 (Appendix D). District superintendents granted permission to contact schools within each district. Of the 147 school districts, twenty-one granted permission for the questionnaires to be mailed to schools in May 2009. Two districts contacted the researcher after the due date expressing interest in the study. The researcher conveyed a re-mail was necessary if the percentage of returned questionnaires was less than 50%. In July, the researcher separately e-mailed non-responding superintendents from the first mail-out and superintendents expressing interest in the study missing the first deadline. The researcher e-mailed 124 district superintendents resulting in three new districts approving permission to contact principals. Sixteen schools were mailed the

questionnaire, and twelve schools from the May mailing were re-mailed the questionnaire supported from a return rate of less than 50%. Four hundred nine questionnaires were mailed in May: one hundred fifty (i.e., 37%) completed questionnaires were returned from the first mail-out, and only one hundred four were retained from this set. One hundred eighty-two questionnaires were re-mailed to twelve schools, and two hundred fifty-eight were mailed to the new participating schools in September: This resulted in four hundred forty questionnaires mailed in the September mail-outs. Two hundred twenty-seven (i.e., 52%) completed questionnaires were returned from the September mail-outs. The total number of both mail-outs resulted in twenty-four school districts granting access and thirty-five schools agreeing to receive the questionnaires. Combined totals for the two separate mail-outs consisted of eight hundred forty-nine questionnaires mailed and three-hundred seventy-seven returned questionnaires for a return rate of 44%. Combining the one hundred four retained questionnaires from the first mail-out and the two hundred twenty-seven from the second mail-out, a total of three hundred thirty-one questionnaires were considered. Twenty-two questionnaires were purged prior to quantitative analysis due to incomplete data, delimiting demographics, re-mails, and cell size issues. Three hundred nine questionnaires were analyzed. Further information is located in Chapters III and IV.

Descriptive Statistics

The participants included 309 state-certified Kindergarten, First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth grade teacher-practitioners in a southeastern state in the continental United States. Teacher-practitioners were asked to identify the

highest educational degree achieved: Bachelor's, Master's, Specialist's, Doctorate's, and Other. Of the 309 teacher practitioners, the outcome data revealed 171 Bachelor's, 129 Master's, 7 Specialist's, and 2 Doctorate's. Six teacher-practitioners indicated National Board Certification in addition to highest educational degree. Of the 309 certified teacher-practitioners, 45% indicated achieving graduate degrees.

The two independent measures of this study included years of teaching experience and grade level designations. Data from the 309 participants revealed, 111 participants indicated 0 – 8 years of experience, 95 participants indicated 9 – 18 years of experience, and 103 participants indicated 19 + years of experience. The 0 – 8 years of experience group comprised the greatest number of participants, and 9 – 18 years of experience comprised the least number of participants. For grade designations, levels were combined: 106 Kindergarten and First (K – 1) grade teacher-practitioners, 101 Second and Third (2 – 3) grade teacher-practitioners, and 102 Fourth and Fifth (4 – 5) grade teacher-practitioners. The combined Kindergarten and First grade level designations comprised the greatest number of participants. The combined Second and Third grade level designations comprised the least number of participants. Combining the two measures in creating grouping cells resulted in (a) thirty-five 0 – 8 / K – 1 teacher-practitioners, (b) thirty-six 0 – 8 / 2 – 3 teacher-practitioners, (c) forty 0 – 8 / 4 – 5 teacher-practitioners, (d) thirty 9 – 18 / K – 1 teacher-practitioners, (e) thirty-seven 9 – 18 / 2 – 3 teacher-practitioners, (f) twenty-eight 9 – 18 / 4 – 5 teacher-practitioners, (g) forty-one 19 + / K – 1 teacher-practitioners, (h) twenty-eight 19 + / 2 – 3 teacher-practitioners, and

(i) thirty-four 19 + / 4 – 5 teacher-practitioners. The combined years of experience and grade level designations resulted in the 19 + / K – 1 group comprising the greatest number of participants. The combined years of experience and grade level designations resulted in the 9 – 18 / 4 – 5 group comprising the least number of participants.

The descriptive statistics reported in Tables 8, 9, 10, and 11, list means (*M)*, standard deviations (*SD)*, and sample population (*N*) relative to the four dependent factors. Table 8 displays descriptive statistics for Peer Teacher by years of experience and grade level designations. Table 9 displays descriptive statistics for Professional Development by years of experience and grade level designations. Table 10 displays descriptive statistics for the Internet by years of experience and grade level designations. Table11 displays descriptive statistics for School Administrators by years of experience and grade level designations.

Statistical Analysis

The research question for this study investigated the effects of three levels of years of experience and three levels of grade designations on frequency selection of perceived reliable sources of reading instruction information. A 3 X 3 (Years X Grade) Factorial MANOVA analyzed the 309 completed questionnaires in order to determine if statistically significant differences existed among four dependent variables of perceived reliable sources of information (i.e., peer teachers, professional development, Internet, and school administrators) for reading instruction among the 309 certified teacher-practitioners for two independent variables: years of experience (i.e., 0 - 8, 9 - 18, and 19 +) and grade level designations (i.e., Kindergarten, First, Second, Third, Fourth, and

Fifth grades). The Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices indicates that the observed covariance matrices of the dependent variables are unequal across groups, Box's M = 118.12, F(80, 97388.04) = 1.42, p = .009. Means and standard deviations are presented in Tables 8, 9 ,10, and 11. The MANOVA indicated no significant interaction between years of experience and grade level designations among the four dependent sources of reading instruction information, Pillai's Trace = .05, F(16, 1200) = .86, p = .62; however, the results revealed a significant main effect for years of experience, Pillai's Trace = .06, F(8, 596) =2.12, p = .03. The univariate follow-up for the main effect of years of experience reported one dependent variable (i.e., Internet) significant, F(2, 300) = 5.93, p < .01, partial η^2 = .04 at.05 α: Partial η^2 of 4% indicated a small effect (Cohen, 1988). Pairwise comparisons further identified the only significant difference among groups was between teacher-practitioners with 0 - 8 years of experience and teacher-practitioners with 19 + years of experience in the frequency of perceived reliability in the Internet for reading instruction knowledge (p = .001). Figure 1 illustrates a scatterplot of the significant, correlating main effect the measures of years on Internet.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics for Peer Teachers

Source	Years of Experience	Grade	*M*	*SD*	*N*
PEERS	0-8	K-1	1.81	.67	35
		2-3	2.03	.74	36
		4-5	2.00	.84	40
		TOTAL	1.95	.76	111
	9-18	K-1	1.75	.65	30
		2-3	2.22	.84	37
		4-5	2.09	.83	28
		TOTAL	2.04	.80	95
	19+	K-1	1.89	.68	41
		2-3	2.14	.72	28
		4-5	2.05	.75	34
		TOTAL	2.01	.72	103

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics for Professional Development

Source	Years of Experience	Grade	*M*	*SD*	*N*
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	0-8	K-1	2.36	.86	35
		2-3	2.41	.80	36
		4-5	2.31	.66	40
		TOTAL	2.36	.77	111
	9-18	K-1	2.39	.91	30
		2-3	2.38	.73	37
		4-5	2.31	.81	28
		TOTAL	2.36	.81	95
	19+	K-1	2.39	.77	41
		2-3	2.24	.63	28
		4-5	2.41	.72	34
		TOTAL	2.36	.71	103

Table 10

Descriptive Statistics for the Internet

Source	Years of Experience	Grade	*M*	*SD*	*N*
INTERNET	0-8	K-1	2.29	.83	35
		2-3	2.18	.69	36
		4-5	2.11	.70	40
		TOTAL	2.19	.74	111
	9-18	K-1	2.14	.75	30
		2-3	2.45	.80	37
		4-5	2.57	.87	28
		TOTAL	2.39	.82	95
	19+	K-1	2.63	.77	41
		2-3	2.48	.77	28
		4-5	2.56	.81	34
		TOTAL	2.57	.78	103

Table 11

Descriptive Statistics for School Administrators

Source	Years of Experience	Grade	*M*	*SD*	*N*
ADMINISTRATORS	0-8	K-1	2.25	.80	35
		2-3	2.27	.94	36
		4-5	2.17	.91	40
		TOTAL	2.23	.88	111
	9-18	K-1	2.41	.85	30
		2-3	2.42	.89	37
		4-5	2.52	.97	28
		TOTAL	2.45	.89	95
	19+	K-1	2.24	.67	41
		2-3	2.49	.97	28
		4-5	2.29	.78	34
		TOTAL	2.33	.80	103

Summary of Quantitative Results

The purpose of the quantitative phase of this study was to analyze the researcher-created questionnaire for reliability of correlation of items and identify if significant differences existed between perceived reliability of sources for reading instruction knowledge within the measures of years of experience and grade level designations. The quantitative phase revealed for the pilot study item 15 should be eliminated in order for items to report acceptable limits of correlation. The quantitative phase revealed for the field-test no significant difference in the interaction of the independent demographic variables of years of experience and grade level designations on the dependent source variables; however, a significant main effect was reported indicating a difference in years of experience. The univariate follow-up reported the Internet as the only significantly different dependent variable. Only two groups of years of experience as a function of the Internet reported a significant difference: 0 - 8 years and 19 + years. Teacher-practitioners with 9 – 18 years of experience reported no difference in the main effect of Internet.

Phase II: Qualitative Results

The purpose of the qualitative phase was to add breadth and depth through comments teacher-practitioners applied to the statistical findings of the quantitative phase. The researcher collected qualitative data through two venues: questionnaire comments and interview questions. All participants were offered the opportunity to provide additional perspectives through comments on the questionnaire for each of the nineteen vignettes poised. In the directions for completing the questionnaire, additional space provided for comments was

directed to the back of the questionnaire.

Qualitative data was also collected through interviews. The sixteen randomly selected participants were asked structured and unstructured questions comprising a semi-structured interview (Table 1). Discussion of reading instruction beyond the initial questions was also documented. The findings of the quantitative phase stipulated *years of experience* as the significant main effect; therefore, the results are categorically segmented as *Questionnaire Comments* and subdivided by years of experience. The section *Interview Responses* provides a summary of the discussion by school and teacher.

Questionnaire Comments

Peer teachers 0 – 8 years. Two comments were elicited from teacher-practitioners with 0 – 8 years of experience regarding peer teachers.

Comment 1: "Objectives are known prior to teaching.

Comment 2: " They [peers] have knowledge of the objectives."

Peer teachers 9 – 18 years. Ten comments were elicited by teacher-practitioners with 9 – 18 years of experience regarding peer teachers.

Comment 1: "Peer teachers are excellent sources if they are qualified and passionate about their job."

Comment 2: "We have weekly benchmarks given by the district."

Comment 3: "State framework."

Comment 4: "Although we meet for common planning every other week, there is often not adequate time for sharing."

Comment 5: "I've never had peer teacher."

Comment 6: "As long as we all keep informed about new objectives and

curriculum”

Comment 7: “Peer teachers are a reliable source of new, or different, ideas for reading instruction.

Comment 8: “I have not used peer teachers.”

Comment 9: “We do not use peer teachers.”

Comment 10: “I rely on state curriculum for objectives.”

Peer teachers with 19 + years. Six comments were elicited by teacher-practitioners with 19 + years of experience regarding peer teachers.

Comment 1: “It is not they are not reliable they just don’t share unless you ask.”

Comment 2: “Objectives set by state framework.”

Comment 3: “Objectives are given by district.”

Comment 4: “Our grade level gets together often to plan for reading instruction and share ideas.”

Comment 5: “Anytime one of use finds something new or different that is successful, we share it with our peers.”

Comment 6: “When teacher can plan and discuss ideas on how to teach specific ideas or objectives, everyone benefits. If a teacher is having trouble with a concept, others may have a different way to present the concept.”

Professional development comments of teacher-practitioners with 0 – 8 years of experience. Three comments were elicited by teacher-practitioners with 0 - 8 years of experience regarding professional development.

Comment 1: “Professional development is a great source, but we need

more professional development opportunities."

Comment 2: "We don't have professional development anymore."

Comment 3: "They [professional development presenters] have knowledge of the objectives."

Professional development comments of teacher-practitioners with 9 – 18 years of experience. Eight comments were elicited by teacher-practitioners with 9 - 18 years of experience regarding professional development

Comment 1: "If the development is organized and has taught out/tested ideas to implement" the professional development is a reliable source of new, or different, ideas for reading instruction.

Comment 2: "District" provides objectives.

Comment 3: "State framework" provides objectives.

Comment 4: "We have had wonderful opportunities, especially within the past three years for reading instruction ideas."

Comment 5: "Especially recently! We have revised competencies [objectives]."

Comment 6: "Our in-services are usually geared toward higher grades."

Comment 7: "I can't afford to pay for workshops and school district no longer pays: Few professional development opportunities within the district."

Comment 8: "We do not get to go to professional development anymore. Occasionally they provide staff professional development days when the district brings in someone. Usually it is not

something I find beneficial form my classroom."

Professional development comments of teacher-practitioners with 19 + years of experience. Seven comments were elicited by teacher-practitioners with 19 + years of experience regarding professional development

Comment 1: "Offered."

Comment 2: "Information also in teacher's editions."

Comment 3: "Objectives set by state framework."

Comment 4: "Anytime we ask for a specific need to be met by professional development, it is-"

Comment 5: "Professional development rarely focuses on reading."

Comment 6: "The presenter or material does not always apply to our grade level."

Comment 7: "Most of our professional development does not focus on specific teaching methods or actual things we can apply in the classroom. It they did address our grade level and cover specific ideas or methods, it would be valuable."

Internet comments of teacher-practitioners with 0 – 8 years of experience. Three comments were elicited by teacher-practitioners with 0 - 8 years of experience regarding the Internet.

Comment 1: "Children's progress reports and helpful activities to use."

Comment 2: "children's progress assessment/screening."

Comment 3: "The Internet has up-to-date information from various sources."

Internet comments of teacher-practitioners with 9 – 18 years of experience. One comment was elicited by teacher-practitioners with 9 - 18 years of experience regarding the Internet.

Comment 1: "Use it [the Internet] for state framework.

Internet comments of teacher-practitioners with 19 + years of experience. Five comments were elicited by teacher-practitioners with 19 + years of experience regarding the Internet.

Comment 1: "This school years all the helpful sites have been blocked."

Comment 2: "Sites are blocked."

Comment 3: "There are many suggestions or ideas on the Internet, but time is a factor."

Comment 4: "I am sure there are sites that would provide this information. However, I do not have the time to find them."

Comment 5: "Use it [the Internet] at home for every new unit."

School administrator comments of teacher-practitioners with 0 – 8 years of experience. Two comments were elicited by teacher-practitioners with 0 - 8 years of experience regarding school administrators.

Comment 1: "Do not go to them because they have so much to do."

Comment 2: "They get information and give it to us."

School administrator comments of teacher-practitioners with 9 – 18 years of experience. Four comments were elicited by teacher-practitioners with 9 - 18 years of experience regarding school administrators.

Comment 1: "We have our book for that [objectives]."

Comment 2: "District gives" objectives.

Comment 3: “State framework” provided objectives.

Comment 4: “Administrators advise us to use curriculum frameworks.”

School administrator comments of teacher-practitioners with 19 + years of experience. Six comments were elicited by teacher-practitioners with 19 + years of experience regarding school administrators.

Comment 1: “Information ins curriculum guide” regarding objectives.

Comment 2: “Objectives come from district.”

Comment 3: “If our school administrators don’t readily know, they find out and get back to us in a timely manner.”

Comment 4: “If they have current classroom experience” administrators are a reliable source for suggesting how to plan for reading instruction.

Comment 5: “Teacher’s assessments are required by administrators” when considered for reliable source of how to assess students.

Comment 6: “Benchmarks are given to the teachers by administrators.”

Interview Responses

The purpose of the interview phase was to add depth to the quantitative data. Interviews occurred concurrently with the completion of the questionnaires. Four randomly selected schools and sixteen randomly selected teacher-practitioners participated in the interview phase: one school located in the southern region, one school located in the central region, and two schools located in the northern region. A greater number of schools in the northern region of the state participated in the study resulting in more than one randomly

selected school in using a numbers table. Thirteen questions were employed as initial introduction to the interview process for each teacher-practitioner. The interview contained seven structured and six unstructured, comingled questions; therefore, the interview was considered semi-structured. A summary of the comments are segmented by school and subdivided by teacher-practitioner.

School 1, Teacher A

The teacher-practitioner has the opportunity to attend district-offered staff development through the year and attends professional teachers' conference during the summer. The Internet, provided by the school, is how the teacher-practitioner learns about updates and legislative changes. The teacher-practitioner teaches reading daily and spends two hours involved in literacy instruction. Weekly grade-level meetings are offered in order to discuss reading instruction.

School 1, Teacher B

The teacher-practitioner has the opportunity to attend district-offered staff development throughout the year. School 1 is presently focusing on reading based programs identified by the teacher-practitioner as a basal program and the Reading Renaissance. Teacher-practitioners at School 1 receive standardized test scores at the end of July. Teacher B feels the most influential reason to seek information about reading instruction is to learn more about higher-order thinking skills. The topics presented at professional development the teacher-practitioner finds most helpful regarding literacy focus on how children learn effective comprehension skills.

School 1, Teacher C

The teacher-practitioner identified the Michael Eaton series as the current reading-based program used in the school. Teacher C attends professional teachers' conferences during the summer: most recently, in Houston. The teacher-practitioner has also attended conferences on Accelerated Reader. Teacher C learns about updates and legislative changes regarding reading instruction through district newsletters. When asked how do you feel about the way you teach reading, Teacher C uses literature as the *grounding*, or base, of the instruction across disciplines. The teacher-practitioner teaches skills designed specifically for reading daily. Teacher C is offered weekly grade level meetings for the purpose of discussing reading instruction: One meeting is for all teachers in the grade and one meeting is departmentalized by subject. Teacher C also discussed the opportunities and benefits of continuing education units (CEU's): The teacher-practitioner had participated in an interactive, Internet continuing education presentation for social studies and considered the experience *fantastic*.

School 1, Teacher D

Teacher D is presently focusing on Accelerated Reader as a school-wide, reading-based program. The Accelerated Reader program at School 1 is motivated through incentives designed from physical education. For example, students are allowed to participate in an activity identified as *run the hall* at the end of the quarter if they have accumulated targeted cut-off points. Other physical activities are incorporated if the target point values are accumulated. The most influential reason Teacher D feels to seek information about reading

instruction is to assist students' development for life-long learning. The teacher-practitioner teaches reading daily for 55 minutes and frequently uses direct instruction. Teacher D has two opportunities to attend two weekly grade level meetings to discuss reading instruction. Other teachers on Teacher D's grade level team-lesson plan, and duties regarding planning are dispersed among the team. The topics Teacher D finds most helpful presented through professional development are how to assist struggling readers and how to motivate readers. Teacher D also expressed concern regarding the continuation of National Board Certification program: a state-funded, teacher-incentive program designed to recognize and award teachers through financial incentives achieving the components of the program.

School 1, Teacher E

Teacher E identified the Michael Eaton series focusing on standardized test as the reading-based program presently initiated at School 1. The teacher-practitioner learns about updates and legislative changes regarding reading instruction through district e-mail. Teacher E does not attend professional reading conference during the summer. The most influential reason Teacher E seeks information for reading instruction is to assist in how to use technology with presentations. The teacher-practitioner teaches reading daily for one hour: This hour of instruction does not encompass English skills. Teacher E has the opportunity to attend two weekly grade level meetings offered at School 1. Professional development is not offered at School 1. Teacher E has school-access to the Internet.

School 2, Teacher F

The teacher-practitioner has opportunities to attend district-offered staff development at School 2. Summer institutes offered through the district are attended. Teacher F learns about updates about legislative changes regarding reading instruction through professional organization newsletters. The teacher-practitioner has the opportunity to attend weekly professional development offered at the school. The topic presented at professional development Teacher F finds most helpful is differentiated instruction. Teacher F has school access to the Internet.

School 2, Teacher G

The teacher-practitioner has the opportunity to attend district-offered staff development. School 2 is presently focusing on a basal, reading-based program. Teacher-practitioners receive standardized test scores in late July. Teacher G attends professional teachers' conferences during the summer. The teacher-practitioner learns about updates and legislative changes reading instruction through professional development, the Internet, and district newsletter. Teacher G feels the most influential reason to seek information about reading instruction is in motivating struggling readers. The teacher-practitioner teaches reading daily. The opportunity to attend weekly grade level meetings to discuss reading instruction is offered at School 2. The topic Teacher G finds most helpful regarding literacy instruction presented at professional development is differentiated instruction. Teacher G has Internet access at School 2.

School 2, Teacher H

The teacher-practitioner has the opportunity to attend district-offered staff development throughout the year. Teacher H identified reading coach, inclusion, and computer-based reading programs as School 2's current reading programs. Teacher H attends professional teachers' conferences during the summer. The teacher-practitioner learns about updates and legislative changed regarding reading instruction through the school district newsletters, broadcast television, and department letters. The most influential reason Teacher H seeks information about reading instruction is to strengthen students' vocabulary and comprehension skills. The teacher-practitioner teaches reading daily. The teacher-practitioner indicated weekly professional development is offered at School 2. Teacher H reported having school-access to the Internet.

School 3, Teacher I

The teacher-practitioner indicated the opportunity existed to attend district-offered staff development throughout the year in various locations in the district. According to Teacher I, School 3 participates in a reading-based program identified as *Reading-to-Reading*. Teacher I indicated participating in a professional teachers' conference focusing on the legislation *No Child Left Behind* presented in a university setting. The teacher-practitioner receives information regarding updates and legislative changes regarding reading instruction through teacher-brochures. Teacher I feels the most influential reason to seek information about reading instruction was to help students learn more literacy skills. The teacher-practitioner teaches reading daily through integrating reading skills across the curriculum, and commented reading is the

"favorite subject to teach." Teacher I has the opportunity to attend weekly grade level meetings to discuss reading instruction. The teacher-practitioner considers student learning activities, information to integrate skills, and Bailey's program as the most helpful the topics presented at professional development opportunities. The teacher-practitioner has school-based Internet access.

School 3, Teacher J

Teacher J has the opportunity to attend district-based staff development throughout the year. The teacher-practitioner identified a basal, reading-based program was the focus of the school. Teacher J does not receive standardized test scores for Kindergarten students; however, DIBELS assesses reading readiness three times a year. The teacher-practitioner does not attend any professional teachers' conferences during the summer. Teacher J learns about updates and legislative changes regarding reading instruction through broadcast television. Teacher J feels the most influential reason to seek information about reading instruction is to investigate *research-based* ways to help student achievement. The teacher-practitioner feels that "sometimes, children are asked to know too much too soon," and occasionally stresses about the amount of information kindergarteners are required to be taught before first grade. Teacher J teaches reading for 1.5 hours daily: not including other literacy skills. The teacher-practitioner has the opportunity to attend weekly grade level meetings to discuss reading instruction. Teacher J attends weekly professional development at School 3; presently, School 3 is participating in a program presented by district-paid consulters. The most important information offered by the consulters are sharing common classroom experiences presented by teacher-practitioners

that occasionally accompany the professional development presentations. The topics Teacher J finds most helpful regarding literacy presented through professional development are activities, centers, materials, blending, and “where to start teaching beginning reading to kindergarteners” supported by research-related studies.

School 3, Teacher K

Teacher K has the opportunity to attend district-offered staff development throughout the year. The teacher-practitioner currently focuses on the school-wide reading-based program titled *Reading is Fundamental*. Standardized test scores are received in July. Teacher K learns about updates and legislative changes regarding reading instruction through broadcast news and teacher meetings. The teacher-practitioner feels changes in reading instruction, differentiated instruction, and learning styles are the most influential reason to seek information about reading instruction. Teacher K feels phonics is important, and is concerned some teacher-practitioners instruct using sight reading for learners classified as beginner readers. The teacher-practitioner teaches reading for 255 minutes daily. Teacher K attends weekly grade level meetings to discuss reading instruction as well as professional development offered at the school. The teacher-practitioner finds student learning styles the topic presented at professional development most helpful. Teacher K has school-based Internet access.

School 3, Teacher L

The teacher-practitioner has the opportunity to attend district-offered staff development throughout the year. Currently, School 3 is focusing on DIBELS as

the reading-based program for this grade. Teacher L attends professional teachers' conference during the summer. The teacher-practitioner learns about updates and legislative changes regarding reading instruction through e-mail and a national teachers organization's e-mail. Teacher L feels how to accommodate different instructional needs in the classroom is the most influential reason to seek information about reading instruction. The teacher-practitioners feels students are not enthusiastic about reading; and, wants students to enjoy reading. Teacher L teaches reading two hours daily. The teacher-practitioner has the opportunity to attend weekly grade level meetings as well as professional development at School 3. Teacher L finds topics relating to DIBELS and follow-up activities to skills focusing on kinesthetic student learning styles are helpful professional development topics regarding literacy. The teacher-practitioner has school-based Internet access. An additional concern of Teacher L regarding literacy is the lack of cohesiveness between the reading-time materials and skills "fitting a good flow."

School 4, Teacher M

Teacher M is offered district-based staff development. The teacher-practitioner participates in a basal, reading-based program. School 4 receives Terra Nova Test scores in June. Teacher M does not participate in summer teachers' conferences; however, attends during the school year. The teacher-practitioner learns about legislative changes through the media, professional materials, school meetings and discussions, and co-workers. Teacher M stated, "I want my children to be the best readers that they can be, and I want the students to enjoy reading as well" in response to the most

influential reason to seek information on reading instruction. The teacher-practitioner dialogued regarding the feelings involved in teaching reading by commenting, “I feel that I can always improve my teaching and I need to try different strategies to reach the different children. I would like more freedom to teach more along the lines of whole language instead of having to follow a set of reading series. In the past, when I taught multiage and when I began to teaching looping, I taught whole language in my class. The students seemed to enjoy it more and learn more. And my assistant and I both seemed to enjoy instruction time more.” Teacher M teaches reading skills three hours daily: The components involved in the reading instruction time are focused on phonics, spelling, writing, and reading. Teacher M does not have weekly grade level meetings; however, peer teachers *talk with each other often* regarding concerns. The teacher-practitioner is not offered weekly professional development. The professional development topics Teacher M finds most helpful are classroom management, reading and math instruction, and stress reliever topics. The teacher-practitioner has school-based Internet access.

School 4, Teacher N

The teacher-practitioner is not offered district-based staff development. According to Teacher N, “Teachers are directed to attend staff development offered by other agencies on their own time.” The school-wide reading instruction program is basal-based. Teacher N views the standardized reports at the beginning of the school year from tests completed in the spring. The teacher-practitioner does not attend professional teacher’s conferences during the summer. Teacher N learns about updates and legislative changes regarding

reading instruction during faculty meetings. The most influential reason to seek information about reading instruction is, "…the need to provide the most effective classroom instruction possible." The teacher-practitioner teaches reading daily for approximately three hours. Teacher M is not offered school-based professional development. The teacher-practitioner feels topics presented at professional development seminars are rarely found appropriate by kindergarten teachers. Teacher M has school-based Internet access.

School 4, Teacher O

Teacher O is offered the opportunity to attend district-based staff development throughout the year. School 4 is presently focusing on a reading-based program. The teacher-practitioner receives standardized reading scores from the previous year's test at the beginning of the academic school year. Teacher O does not attend professional teachers' conferences during the summer. The teacher-practitioner learns about updates and legislative changes regarding reading instruction through school administrators. According to Teacher O, the most influential reason to seek information about reading instruction is, "to keep me up-to-date." The teacher-practitioner feels great success in the way reading is taught; however added, "there is always room for improvement." Teacher O teaches reading daily for approximately two hours. The teacher-practitioner does not have the opportunity to attend weekly professional development; however, desires the opportunity. Teacher O feels comprehension is a topic presented at professional development that would be helpful regarding literacy. The teacher-practitioner has school-based Internet access.

School 4, Teacher P

The teacher-practitioner attends district-offered staff development throughout the year. School 4 is presently focusing on a reading-based program. Teacher P is unsure when standardized test scores are received. Teacher P does not attend professional teachers' conference during the summer. The teacher-practitioner receives information regarding updates and legislative changes regarding reading instruction through e-mails. The teacher-practitioner feels the most influential reason to seek information about reading instruction is the desire to have knowledge regarding current trends, practices, and research. Teacher P feels instruction is effective. The teacher-practitioner focuses on reading through interdisciplinary instruction; however, specific skills focused on reading are taught approximately 1.5 hours daily. The teacher-practitioner is not offered weekly grade level meetings to discuss reading instruction. Teacher P is not offered weekly professional development. The teacher-practitioner finds differentiated instruction a topic most helpful when presented at professional development. Teacher P has school-based Internet access.

Table 12 reveals the responses for the structured interview questions. The structured interview questions were designed to reveal if the sources (i.e., peer teachers, professional development, the Internet, and school administrators) included on the questionnaire are offered to participants. One of the unstructured interview questions asked how updates and legislative changes regarding reading instruction are disseminated to teacher-practitioners. Responses revealed 12 of 20 interviewed responses indicated receiving information from a source other than what is investigated within the

scope of this study regarding legislative changes for reading instruction (Table 13).

Table 12

Interview Responses of Structured Questions

Question	Yes	No
1. Do you have the opportunity to attend district-offered staff development through the school year?	15	1
2. Is your school currently focusing on a reading-based program?	16	0
3. Do you attend any professional teachers' conferences during the summer?	10	6
4. Do you teach reading daily?	16	0
5. Do you have weekly grade-level meetings to discuss reading instruction?	13	3
6. Do you have weekly professional development offered at your school?	11	5
7. Do you have access to the Internet?	16	0

The responses from the structured and unstructured questions assisted in adding depth to the outcome of the data. Further discussion of responses to questions is included in Chapter V.

Table 13

Dissemination Sources of Legislative Changes

Question	P[a]	PD[b]	I[c]	SA[d]	Other
How do you learn about updates and legislative changes regarding reading instruction?	1	4	2	1	12

Note. Dissemination sources indicate dependent variables and Other.
[a]P indicates Peer Teacher; [b]PD indicates Professional Development;
[c]I indicates the Internet; and [d]SA indicates School Administrators.

Summary of Qualitative Results

Qualitative results were reported using questionnaire comments through years of experience and interview responses in narrative form. Teacher-practitioners with 9 – 18 years of experience elicited the greatest total of comments, ten, for peer teachers. Teacher-practitioner with 9 – 18 years of experience elicited the greatest total of comments, eight, for professional development. Teacher-practitioners with 19 + years of experience elicited the greatest total of comments, five, for the Internet. Teacher-practitioners with 19 + years of experience elicited the greatest total of comments, six, for school

administrators. The least amount of comments, one, was elicited by teacher-practitioners with 9 – 18 years of experience for the Internet. A total number of fifty-seven comments were elicited. The majority of teacher-practitioners interviewed reported having access to the sources in this study (i.e., peer teachers, professional development, the Internet, and school administrators); however, responses revealed teacher-practitioners receive or retrieve updates and legislative changes through sources not involved in this study. All responses were reported with a few teacher-practitioners eliciting more than one source for a total of twenty responses.

Summary

A researcher-created questionnaire investigating teacher-practitioner perceived reliability of reading instruction information was subjected to expert critique and a pilot study for the purpose of validating and correlating items. The questionnaire was revised in conjunction with the outcomes of the experts and pilot study and distributed for a voluntary, statewide investigation. A 3 X 3 factorial MANOVA reported no significant differences among the dependent variables (i.e., peer teachers, professional development, the Internet, and school administrators) measured by the independent variables (i.e., years of experience and grade level designations). A significant main effect of *years* followed by a significant univariate of *Internet* was reported. Post hoc revealed teacher-practitioners with 0 – 8 years of experience and 19 + years of experience perceive the Internet as a reliable source for reading instruction; specifically, a significant difference indicating teacher-practitioners of 19 + years of experience perceive the Internet a reliable source of reading instruction more than

teacher-practitioners of 0 – 8 years of experience. The structured interview questions revealed the majority of teacher-practitioners interviewed have access to the sources for reading instruction involved in this study (i.e., peer teachers, professional development, the Internet, and school administrators); however, the majority of teacher-practitioners interviewed revealed information about legislative changes regarding reading instruction were received by specific sources (i.e., news media, professional newsletters, e-mails) not involved in this study.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Chapter V includes the restatement of the focus of the study, demographics of the participants, and limitations of this investigation. Additionally, sections for interpretation of quantitative and qualitative findings, themes of qualitative data relative to the quantitative findings, recommendations, and discussion are provided. A final summary of this study concludes this chapter.

The purpose of this study was to investigate teacher-practitioners perceived reliability of reading instruction sources. A researcher-created instrument was subjected to expert critiques and a pilot study resulting in the revision of the original instrument prior to field-test. The final version of the instrument was completed by 377 teacher-practitioners in a state-wide offered study. Questionnaires were purged if (a) individuals other than the target population completed a questionnaire, (b) if a questionnaire contained incomplete data, (c) for the group 0 – 8 / 4 – 5 for a 1.5% difference among cells, and (d) schools re-mail totals were greater than the first mail-out. Three hundred nine teacher-practitioner participants' questionnaires were analyzed for the quantitative data. The specific criteria focus of the study was to investigate what sources (i.e., peer teacher, professional development, the Internet, and school administrators) certified Kindergarten, First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth grade teacher-practitioners perceived reliable within the measures of years of experience (i.e., 0 – 8, 9 – 18, and 19 +) and grade level designations (i.e., K – 1, 2 – 3, and 4 – 5). Questionnaire items asked teachers to select the frequency

(i.e., always, frequently, occasionally, rarely, and never) of the reliability of the information provided by the sources (i.e., peer teachers, professional development, the Internet, and school administrators). The results of the study findings concluded no interaction in Kindergarten, First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth grade teacher-practitioners' perceived reliability of the information provided by peer teachers, professional development, the Internet, and school administrators within the measures of years of experience and grade level designations. Statistical difference was observed for a main effect of *years* on a univariate follow up of *Internet*. Post hoc comparisons confirmed teacher-practitioners with 19 + years of experience perceive the Internet reliable for reading instruction information more frequently than teacher-practitioners of 0 - 8 years of experience. No significant difference of a main effect was reported among teacher-practitioners with 9 – 18 years of experience regarding Internet reliability. This chapter discusses the possible rationales of the quantitative outcome supported by qualitative data.

Experts

Prior to the pilot study, three university experts in the field of education critiqued the questionnaire for bias, clarity, and aesthetics (Appendix N). One of the experts discussed the issue of terminology regarding the word *reliable*. The expert's understanding of the word *reliable* was *good quality*, and the researcher's expected understanding of the word *reliable* was *consistency*. The expert was concerned whether teacher-practitioners would embrace the same meaning as the researcher. The researcher's explanation of the understanding of *reliable* embraces scientific criteria of the word *reliable* in describing a source

as producing the same results over time. The news media occasionally refers to information from sources as reliable: in the context *quality* infers *of good quality*. This is often considered a misnomer. The scientific field makes no assumption that the term *quality* is synonymous with *reliable*; only that when an outcome is labeled *reliable*, it is understood to produce similar results upon replication (Creswell, 2000; Hair et al., 1998).

Participants

A review of demographic statistics of the participating teacher-practitioners is necessary in assisting the explanation of possible rationales of outcome data. The participants were 309 randomly-selected certified teacher-practitioners. Only completed questionnaires indicating each teacher-practitioner possessed a state teacher's license were considered for the study. Of the 309 teacher practitioners, the outcome data revealed the highest educational level achieved as 171 Bachelor's, 129 Master's, seven Specialist's, and two Doctorate's. Six indicated National Board Certification in addition to highest educational degree.

The two independent measures for this study were years of teaching experience and grade level designations. For years of experience, the outcome data revealed of the 309 teacher-practitioners, 111 participants indicated 0 – 8 years of experience, 95 participants indicated 9 – 18 years of experience, and 103 participants indicated 19 + years of experience. The second independent measure for this study was grade level designations. Grade levels of focus for this study were Kindergarten, First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth. The outcome data revealed of the 309 teacher practitioners, 106 participants

indicated Kindergarten and First grade level designations, 101 participants indicated Second and Third grade level designations, and 102 participants indicated Fourth and Fifth grade level designations.

Limitations

The discussion of limitations regarding research-based studies involves divulging issues related to data collection and analyses. Disclosure of limitations is often associated with threats to reliability and validity of a research-based study providing unobstructed insight to the research for future studies ensuring ethical adjustment for repetition. Relative threats to reliability and validity identified by Creswell and Kirk are addressed within the framework of this investigation (Creswell, 2002; Kirk, 1995). For the purpose of this study, each researcher-identified limitation is discussed through action and reflection.

Time Factor

All public school district superintendents in the state were notified of the opportunity to participate in the study by e-mail at the beginning of May (Appendix D). A follow-up e-mail to superintendents inquired if initial e-mail was received (Appendix E). Principals of districts, in which the superintendent affirmed permission, were notified of the opportunity for their school to participate in the study: Principals were notified by e-mail, if provided, or telephone (Appendix C). If the principal provided permission, the questionnaires were mailed to the school in the middle of May. The directions provided in a letter to the principal stated the questionnaire return date: two weeks after receiving the questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed at two separate times: May and September. The initial mailing of the

questionnaires occurred in May at the end of the academic school year. The state involved in the study was scheduled for state-wide testing during the time the questionnaires were scheduled to arrive at participating schools. Two district superintendents expressed concern regarding the timing of the questionnaires conflicting with the testing schedule: One district superintendent decided not to participate after considering the timing issue. During the summer, three district superintendents contacted the researcher by e-mail and telephone investigating the opportunity to participate in the study during the next academic school year. The researcher indicated to the interested districts the opportunity to participate in the study would be offered again with re-mails to schools reporting low participating numbers of the completed questionnaire from the May mailing. The researcher e-mailed school district superintendents for a second opportunity to participate in the study (Appendix L). In July, districts that had not responded were e-mailed a second time: Three school districts not originally participating in the May mailing responded affirmative for the September mailing (Appendix M). Schools participating in the May mailing were re-mailed if the total number of returned, completed questionnaires was less than 50% of the teacher-practitioner population at the individual schools (Appendix O). Twelve schools out of nineteen were re-mailed the questionnaire, and sixteen schools from the three added school districts were mailed the questionnaires.

Questionnaires were mailed in May and September: at the end of one academic school year and the beginning of the next school year. Attrition and position changes in school administrators occurred at five schools: principals retired, principals switched schools, and due to budget cuts principals assumed

more than one school within a district. These administration changes due to a time factor in the ending of one school year and the beginning of the next year possibly contributed to failure of three re-mails not returned. Before the September mailing, measures were taken through consulting school web pages for administration changes before sending re-mails; however, school web pages had not been updated at this time.

The timing factor proved to be important criteria to whether school districts decided to participate in the study. The state involved in the study participates in state-wide standardized tests in the month of May; the timing of the scheduled testing was a factor to participation. Two superintendents expressed concern through e-mail regarding distress teacher-practitioners might endure in focusing attention on state-wide standardized tests with the added pressure of completing voluntary questionnaires: These superintendents opted to not participate in the study.

Gatekeepers

Superintendents. Three of the superintendents replying to the research invitation conveyed concern for pressure principals might feel to participate in the study. In the letter to the superintendents and principals, the researcher indicated the channels of how permission was secured: Superintendents were informed permission to contact was secured through the state department of education, and principals were informed permission to contact was secured through the state department of education and the district superintendent's office. The three concerned superintendents approved the researcher in contacting the schools within the districts with the assurance the principals would not feel

pressured to participate in the study.

Interaction of Participant Selection

The questionnaire was to include a teacher-practitioner coversheet providing the participant's name and directions for completion. The researcher requested the names, schools, and grades of all the teachers in the state through the state department of education. This information was not received in time for the May mailing; however, a list of teachers was provided for the September mailing. The first mailing did not contain a coversheet ensuring the correct grade level of teacher-practitioners completed the questionnaire; and, several schools offered the questionnaire to participants not identified by demographics (i.e., Kindergarten, First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth grade teachers) as specified in a letter to principals as the target population (Appendix B). Forty individuals not identified as Kindergarten, First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth grade teachers completed the questionnaire in the May mailing. This resulted in factors contributing to re-mails to schools in which less than 50% of the targeted demographics were returned. The September mail-outs included a coversheet including a teacher name, or grade level, school name, and school address. The September mail-outs, which included the coversheet, stated directions on completion and return in addition to the researcher's telephone and e-mail address (Appendix H). Twenty individuals did not answer all of the questions, or did not indicate possessing a certified state teacher's license, eliminating questionnaires from the participant sample. Of the 377 questionnaires received, 309 fulfilled all of the criteria of the study to be considered completed questionnaires of certified Kindergarten, First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth

grade certified teacher-practitioners.

A second change to the questionnaire for the re-mails was the logo of The University of Southern Mississippi was removed for the September mail-outs. Although approximately the same quantity of questionnaires was mailed for each of the two mail-outs (i.e., May mail-out: 408; September mail-out: 440), more teacher-practitioners completed and returned the questionnaire without the logo (May return: 150; September return: 227).

Statistical Assumptions

The Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices indicated observed covariance matrices regarding the dependent variables were unequal across groups. This occurs when the variance across groups is not stable; however, the sample sizes of cells were comparable. Adjustment to include a difference no greater than 1.5% between the lowest and highest cell, as suggested in Hair et al., was calculated (Hair et al., 1998). MANOVA is reasonably robust to violations of homogeneity of variance when adjusted using the 1.5% difference.

Reliability of measures. The researcher-created instrument was subjected to a pilot study for the purpose of reliability. Cronbach Reliability reports correlation with lower acceptable limits .6 and .7. Four dependent measures (peer teachers, professional development, the Internet, and school administrators) were analyzed using the Cronbach Reliability Test. Cronbach reported three of the measures (peer teachers, professional development, and school administrators) were reliably correlated: peer teachers (.910), professional development (.898), and school administrators (.786). The Internet was the only dependent measure in which items were adjusted. Item 15 was

identified as limiting correlation; therefore, item 15 was eliminated decreasing the questionnaire total number of items from 20 to 19.

Researchers do not have control over all factors contributing to data or result outcomes. Threats to external validity and variables effecting data outcomes perceived through participant perspectives classified as Orne's demand-characteristics relative to this study are discussed (Kirk, 1995; Orne, 1962).

Interaction of History

On April 29 2009, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in conjunction with the World Health Organization (WHO) raised the level for the H1N1 influenza pandemic from a level 4 to 5 in The United States indicating the possibility for rapid contamination from human-to-human contact. Before superintendents were e-mailed for the first mailing in May, 43 states had reported 624 cases and 845 probable cases. By August, a reported one million people in the United States had been infected resulting in 9,079 hospitalizations and 593 deaths. The state involved in the state-wide study was categorized as a region of wide-spread influenza which the CDC noted is uncommon for August. The unusual circumstances of the timing of the pandemic had the potential to influence district superintendents and participants in not participating in the study: factors related to the prioritization of health issues over educational research.

Subject-Predisposition Effects

Faithful subjects. Participants completing the questionnaire providing comments and answering each statement with variation to other statements are demonstrating characteristics congruent with cooperation: not uncooperative, or

overly cooperative. It is evident by viewing the variance of responses in this study's questionnaires, and in the dialogue provided in interviews, the majority of participants were appropriately cooperative portraying faithful subject characteristics. According to Kirk, faithful subjects are interested in advancing scientific knowledge and are capable of eliminating personal hypotheses about the study in question (Kirk, 1995).

Screw you effect. Participants completing the questionnaire under circumstances of pressure, uncooperativeness, and resentment may try to sabotage the investigation. The *screw you effect* was identified by Masling in classifying participants either consciously, or subconsciously, attempting to respond in direct opposition to the researcher's hypotheses (Masling, 1966). Fifteen completed questionnaires (i.e., 5% of the total 309 completed questionnaires) indicated no variance in responses among the 19 vignettes (e.g., *always, frequently*, or *occasionally* circled for all items) in addition to not providing comments or additional information. All nine groupings for this study (i.e., 0 – 8 / K – 1, 0 – 8 / 2 – 3, 0 – 8 / 4 – 5, 9 – 18 / K – 1, 9 – 18 / 2 – 3, 9 – 18 / 4 – 5, 19 + / K – 1, 19 + / 2 – 3, and 19 + / 4 – 5) contained at least one completed teacher questionnaire with no variance among the frequency for the sources. The groups with the largest amount of non-variance containing three participants within each were for the groups 0 – 8 / K – 1, 0 – 8 / 2 – 3, and 19 + / K – 1: teacher-practitioners at opposing ends of the career spectrum. A contrast perspective to teacher-practitioners with no variance among frequencies for all sources revealed participants providing a questionnaire comment responded with variance among source vignettes. All years of experience

groupings had participants eliciting comments; however, the grouping with the most comments was teacher-practitioners with 9 – 18 years of experience. Although teacher-practitioners with 9 – 18 years of experience elicited the most questionnaire comments overall, this group had only one comment regarding the Internet.

MANOVA is sensitive to outliers. When quantitative results were revealed through outlier exploration participants were identified by case number in which responses were significantly outside the norm. The source with the greatest number of outliers was school administrators.

Interpretation of Findings

Quantitative Results Supported by Quantitative Findings

Pilot study. The original researcher-created questionnaire consisted of 20 items segmented into vignettes focusing on the four sources (i.e., peer teachers, professional development, the Internet, and school administrators) of reading instruction information. Eighteen graduate students completed the original version of the questionnaire which was subsequently subjected to the Cronbach Reliability Tests revealing peer teachers', professional development, and school administrators' vignettes as reliably correlated; however, the Internet vignettes were not reliably correlated on the original 20-item design. The Cronbach Reliability Tests indicated if item 15 was removed, reliability limits would be achieved. Item 15 was removed, and the questionnaire proceeded to field-test. The original item 15 for Internet stated, "The Internet is a reliable source of information on what objectives to teach for reading instruction." This item was removed for the final version. After the questionnaires were returned,

teacher-practitioner questionnaire comments elicited one response regarding the Internet for objectives. A teacher-practitioner with 9 – 18 years of experience stated the Internet was used for retrieving objectives from the state framework. The one questionnaire comment, and the lack of more comments and interview responses for the Internet as a source of reliable objectives in conjunction with the outcome of Cronbach, suggests question 15 received extreme-mixed responses in the pilot testing phase of the questionnaire; however, five interviewed teacher-practitioners and two questionnaire comments stated the Internet is the source in which updates and legislative changes regarding reading instruction is disseminated. The opposing views of the lack of correlation of Internet items, but the support of dissemination of updates and changes through the Internet suggests teacher-practitioners perceive the Internet as a reliable source of information for specific instructional needs.

The focus of this study was to investigate certified teacher-practitioners perceived reliability of sources for reading instruction knowledge. The final questionnaire version contained 19-items and was administered to analyze frequency of perceived reliability of four reading instruction sources (i.e., peer teachers, professional development, the Internet, and school administrators). For each source, a section of vignettes were posed within three educator roles identified by The United States Department of Education as teacher-practitioner responsibilities: planning for instruction, instructing, and assessing. Teachers often acquire information from sources readily available (Davis, 1999). Peer teachers, school administrators, and professional development meetings offer teacher-practitioners the opportunity to acquire solicited, and unsolicited,

information regarding reading instruction information. Hollingsworth (1988) concluded the element of limited time has contributed to teacher-practitioners adherence to not deviate from established beliefs.

Teacher-practitioners often have access to a variety of available sources for reading instruction when needed, or wanted, for planning, instructing, and assessing (Cibulka & Nakayama, 2000; Gorton & Schneider, 1991; Shannon & Goodman, 1994). The majority of teacher-practitioners interviewed in this study reported having access to peer teachers, professional development, the Internet, and school administrators. The main quantitative finding of this study concluded teacher-practitioners were significantly different in years of experience on perceived reliability of the Internet as a source of reading instruction information; teacher-practitioners with 19 + years of experience perceived the Internet as a reliable source of reading instruction information more than teacher-practitioners with 0 – 8 years of experience. No significant difference was found in the interaction of years of experience and grade level designations on perceived reliability of reading instruction sources. Additionally, no difference was reported for a main effect for grade level designations on perceived reliability of reading instruction sources.

An exploration using theoretical perspective and information obtained through interviews and comments assisted in adding depth to the findings: (a) peer teachers, professional development, and school administrators are not significantly different from each other in teacher-practitioner perceived reliability within the measures of years of experience and grade level designations, or on the singular independent variable of grade level designations, (b) the Internet is

perceived as a reliable source of reading instruction information for teacher-practitioners with 0 – 8 years and 19 + years of experience, and (c) no significant difference was reported for perceived reliability of the Internet within the grouping of teacher-practitioners of 9 – 18 years of experience. Four themes emerged from questionnaire comments and interview responses of teacher-practitioners regarding the Internet as a reliable source of reading information: The Internet as a source of reading instruction, the Internet as a source of instructional technique, the Internet as a safe and available source of planning for reading instruction information, and the Internet as a source for updates and changes regarding legislation for reading instruction.

The Internet as a source of planning for reading instruction. Responses of discussions collected in the interview phase and comments written on the questionnaires assisted with investigating rationales of the reported main effect of perceived reliability with the Internet within the measures of the years of experience of teacher-practitioners with 0-8 years and 19 + years. The dependent variables of reading instruction information for this study included sources considered readily available to all teacher-practitioners: peer teachers, professional development, the Internet, and school administrators. Questionnaire comments and interview responses reveal teacher-practitioners utilize the Internet in planning for reading instruction. This finding is congruent with planning as one of three primary reasons teacher-practitioners use the Internet investigated by Serim and Koch (1996). In this study, a teacher-practitioner with 19 + years of experience commented on the questionnaire the Internet is used to plan for every unit; even though, research

for new units had to be completed at home.

Two additional comments by separate teacher-practitioner with 19 + years of experience indicated a desire to use the Internet; however, time was not available to investigate instructional needs. In order to explore possible explanations of why *time* was an issue regarding the Internet as a source of information, questionnaire responses elicited more information than the interview responses. One of the positive factors of the Internet is the opportunity to investigate at a convenient time for the teacher-practitioner; however, when excess opportunities are revealed, teacher-practitioners can become confused and disengaged in pursuing information on the Internet (Allington, 2002; Serim & Koch, 1996). The Internet has potential for access-at-will; however, two 19 + years of experience commented the school had blocked sites considered *helpful* to the teacher-practitioners. Lack of exposure from time, source availability, and quality information to various planning opportunities often results in teacher-practitioner refusal of embracing initiatives derived from research (Denton, Vaugh, & Fletcher, 2003). Internet as one of the sources in this study has offered teacher-practitioners the autonomy to investigate instructional issues and concerns in coordination with teacher-selected time and convenience; according to relative research however, the amount of possibilities the Internet provides is overwhelming and prevents teacher-practitioners from locating a desired answer to an instructional concern within a reasonable amount of time.

Teacher-practitioners interviewed indicated with the welcomed influx of advanced technology (e.g., SMART Boards, program-based Internet options, etc.) the instructional opportunity to interlace interaction, objective,

guidance, and enrichment for reading instruction is apparent. A teacher-practitioner with 9 – 18 years of experience stated the Internet is used "for state frameworks." A teacher-practitioner with 19 + years of experience commented the Internet is used "at home for every new unit." Teacher-practitioners are relying on the Internet to provide information typically located in text materials (e.g., local, state, and federal guidelines, ideas for units of study).

In order to explore the concept teachers prefer non-personable sources for reading instruction, an interview question investigated the concept. Teacher-practitioners were asked how they learn about updates and legislative changes regarding reading instruction. Of the 20 responses to the interview questions identifying sources of legislative updates, 12 teacher-practitioners commented local, state, and federal changes are received or retrieved through other sources not included in this study (Table 13). The teacher-practitioners' responses included other non-personal, media-related interactions. Other sources of updates and legislative changes regarding reading instruction information not included in this study identified by participants were e-mails, district office communication, local and national television news, and professional teacher organizations' newsletters: e-mails were classified as non-Internet related as information received was not from an unknown source. The majority of *other* sources disseminating instructional information were identified by the researcher as technologically-based or professional organizations.

The Internet as a source of instructional technique. An initial qualitative finding of this study supporting the quantitative outcome of the perceived

reliability of the Internet for reading instruction for the two teacher-practitioner groups of 0 – 8 years of experience and 19 + years of experience was the use of the Internet as a source of investigating instructional technique. To further explore what reading instruction information participants were investigating, an interview question asked participants to identify the most influential reason to seek reading instruction information. Of the eighteen responses (some teachers elicited more than one response and some responses overlapped), elements characterized as *instructional- based* were cited. For example, Teacher-practitioner N from School 4 interviewed stated the reason for seeking reading instruction information was, "the need to provide the most effective instruction possible." This statement suggests teacher-practitioners investigate instructional techniques exploring factors of effectiveness: The interviewed teacher-practitioners stated more specific reasons (e.g., how to differentiate instruction, how to teach vocabulary skills, how to motivate struggling readers, and how to teach higher-order thinking skills). Of the instructional topics teacher-practitioners stated as reasons to seek reading instruction information, the concept of differentiated instruction was the most prevalent: Most of the teacher-practitioners responding to the question of *why seek reading instruction* information stated an instructional need to know *how* to provide individualized instruction. Differentiated instruction is considered a theory and a process. Hall (2004) describes differentiated instruction as a belief in an approach to vary instruction supported in individual and group instructional needs. Public-supported American classrooms have the potential to instruct English as Language Learners (ELL), mainstreamed students, and students with

various instructional needs. American public schools offer instruction to all students with various needs; therefore, differentiated instruction is a plausible consideration for practice and procedure.

Teacher-practitioners were offered the opportunity to add comments for further elaboration for each questionnaire vignette. Teachers of 0 – 8 years of experience commented the Internet was a source of reliable information for academic progress, activities, assessments, screening, and the opportunity to retrieve up-to-date information from a variety of sources. Teacher-practitioners with 19 + years of teaching experience commented a high level of interest of wanting to retrieve information from the Internet with two limiting factors: *time* to investigate and blocked Internet sites from school-based access. Time appeared to be a factor to teacher-practitioners with greater years of experience. A teacher-practitioner of 19 + years of experience commented, “I am sure there are sites that would provide this information; however, I do not have the time to find them.” Another teacher stated, “There are many suggestions of ideas on the Internet, but time is a factor.” One comment from a 19 + years of experience teacher-practitioner indicated although time was a factor, the Internet was utilized “at home for every unit” to investigate new or different ideas. Two 19 + years of experience teacher-practitioners stated the school had blocked websites considered *helpful*. Teacher-practitioners with 19 + years of experience conveyed interest in wanting to use the Internet for reading instruction; however time and access were obstacles. Although, when the Internet was inaccessible at school, teacher-practitioners were determined to locate useful information results in using home-based Internet access to retrieve instructional information.

This study's findings suggest a main concern of teacher-practitioners is within the domain of providing instruction. A similar study by Small investigating Internet usage reported teacher-practitioners participated in technological investigations for the purpose of instructional design: 76% searched for lesson plans, 23% for unit plans, and student activities resulted in 1% (Small et al., 1998). In the study by Small, of the participants identifying the concept of instructional style important, 85% inquired wanted to know *how* to design instruction. The findings produced in this study of perceived reliable sources elucidate teacher-practitioners' instructional needs to investigate instructional information reflective of causatives within school climates: Investigation of instructional needs by the Internet are deterred by time to retrieve a desired result and access to the Internet from school-based locations.

The Internet as a safe and available source of reading instruction information. A related finding of this study investigating perceived reliable sources of reading instruction information for teacher-practitioners with 0 – 8 years of experience and 19 + years of experience regarding the Internet as reliable suggests teacher-practitioners may be uncertain and anxious regarding professional knowledge with the possibility of fluctuating universally accepted concepts within the school culture and do not seek sources other than self (Fuchs, 1969). A necessary criteria identified by Shepherd and Ragan (1992) of a stipulating, positive school climate is trust. Distrust in the school climate contributes to organization malfunction (Kushman,1992). A questionnaire comment from a 19 + years of experience teacher-practitioner stated, "It is not that they [peer teachers] are not reliable; they just don't share unless you ask."

Three additional comments by 9 – 18 years of experience teacher-practitioners stated, “We do not use peer teachers”, “I have not used peer teachers”, and “I’ve never had a peer teacher.” Accessibility and interaction of the Internet are factors these comments suggest peer teachers do not possess. The source of school administrators produced similar results. Comments regarding school administrator and teacher-practitioner interaction included, “Teacher assessments are required by administrators”, “Do not go to them because they have so much to do”, and “Administration advises us to use curriculum frameworks” suggests administrators are not perceived accessible. Additionally, the lack of comments in support of administrators was noticeable. Although the comments for professional development did not reveal trust issues, accessibility was a concern. Comments regarding lack of availability included, “I can’t afford to pay for workshops and school district no longer pays”, “We do not get to go to professional development anymore”, and “Professional development is a great source; but, we need more professional development opportunities.” These comments support the Internet in providing a trusted, accessible avenue to procure needed instructional information convenient for teacher-practitioners.

With the reintroduction of the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965 through the current legislation of No Child Left Behind, the bridge between what is presently accepted research-related practice for individual classrooms and students and what has been considered common practice appears in flux. Teacher-practitioners often feel isolated in de-compartmentalized settings (United States Department of Labor, 2004). Instinct to comply with information retrieved is often predicated in usability, not credibility (Davis, 1999). With the

advent of research-based practices inundating the instructional realm, teachers are less sure of effective procedures and search for information in private to confirm, or guide, needs. The Internet and other non-personable sources allow teachers the opportunity to investigate without highlighting a deficiency for instructional information or direction. From the qualitative findings of this study, trust, access, and time are factors teacher-practitioners consider in selecting the Internet as a perceived reliable source. If teacher-practitioners perceive a lack of purpose and ownership of topics provided by other sources, motivation for success can become obscure (Gennaoui & Kretschmer, 1996).

The Internet as a source of updates and legislative changes. A third qualitative finding supporting the Internet as a reliable source of reading instruction information of teacher-practitioners of 0 – 8 years of experience and 19 + years of experience was the Internet as a source of updates and legislative changes. In Table 13, teacher-practitioners identified technological venues (i.e., e-mails, Internet, online professional journals, and district newsletters through e-mails) as the sources of updates and changes regarding reading instruction information. A questionnaire comment from a teacher-practitioner with 0 – 8 years of experience stated, “The Internet has up-to-date information from various sources.” This comment in conjunction with the findings of technological sources as main venue of retrieving updates and legislative changes suggests teacher-practitioners use the Internet to acquire specific, detailed information in response to the interview question, “How do you learn about updates and legislative changes regarding reading instruction information.”

The Internet decreases the amount of time teacher-practitioners require in order to implement findings of instructional investigations. When copious gaps in time between presentation and implementation assists, the probability the teacher-practitioner will reject the new method, strategy, or procedure increases (Greenwood & Abbot, 2001). Terminology often used in peer-reviewed journals can deter teacher-practitioners from an investigative-analysis perspective pursuing reading instruction information predicated in experimental design (Anderson et al., 1994). In an effort to assist teacher-practitioner confidence in instructional procedures and outcomes of research-based instruction, the terminology was reclassified as *research-related* and *scientifically- based* to deemphasize the perception of experiments and invasive investigation techniques. Whether or not this strategy has been successful has not yet been determined. Failure of teacher-practitioners to implement current, research-based procedures denies students needing an organized approach to reading instruction the opportunity to achieve academically (Vaughn & Dammann, 2001). Student diversity necessitates teacher-practitioners investigate alternate procedures, methods, and strategies for student achievement (Vygotsky, 1986). According to a qualitative outcome of this study, teacher-practitioners are receiving reading instructional information through the advent of the Internet and have the opportunity to investigate updates and changes through local, state, and federal venues.

The majority of participants interviewed (81%) stated sources associated with the Internet or other technology are responsible for disseminating updates and changes regarding reading instruction information more than personable

sources revealed in Table 13 in this study (i.e., peers, professional development meetings, and school administrators). The participants revealed in the interviews and comments sections of the questionnaire (a) district e-mails, (b) professional teacher organizations' websites, (c) news broadcast, (d) the Internet, and (e) e-mails from others as sources in which concepts and procedures regarding instructional changes were retrieved and disseminated. The degree of accessibility of the Internet and other technological sources could be considered an obstacle to advancing positive instructional outcomes if teacher-practitioners are not fastidious about the information retrieved.

Advancement in technology has assisted the teacher-practitioner in evolving through theistic, natural unfoldment, apperception, stimulus-response, and cognitivist approaches to reading instruction to a more eclectic style. Within the context of Robert Gagné's conditions for learning, Bandoura's *observation learning,* meaning-construction philosophy, and skills-based instruction, technology offers opportunities (e.g., anticipatory set, guided learning, feedback, interaction, etc.) to teacher-practitioners for the purpose of knowledgeable inquiry allowing for adjusting instruction when necessary. The Internet has become an expeditious vector of advancing teacher-practitioner knowledge regarding reading instruction.

Teacher-practitioners alleviate perceptions of isolation without fear of judgment by on-site peer teachers and administration by corresponding with other teacher-practitioners experiencing similar classroom issues through e-mail or Internet conference (Honey & Heriquez, 1993). The responses of the teacher-practitioner participants in the interview phase supports this theory

solicited by an unstructured question asking what do you feel is the most influential reason to seek information about reading instruction. Specific responses, while focused on planning for instruction, were varied and included inquiry in (a) how to teach comprehension effectively, (b) how to provide effective instruction, (c) what are the preferred current practices and research guidelines regarding reading instruction, (d) how to strengthen vocabulary skills in students, (e) how to students using the theory of learning styles, (f) how can incorporation of technology assist reading instruction, (g) how to motivate and assist struggling readers, (h) how to prepare students for statewide testing, (i) how to help students enjoy reading, and (j) a majority of teacher-practitioners expressed interest in how to differentiate instruction within self-contained classrooms. When analyzing the responses to the question regarding influential reasons to seek information about reading instruction compared to the question regarding learning about updates and changes presented in Table 13, teacher-practitioners preferred to receive information from non-personable sources. One teacher discussed a positive experience from an Internet conference in which the instructor interacted with responders throughout the conference providing insight and feedback of interactive activities. The teacher-practitioner's descriptive word for the non-personable, interactive conference was *fantastic*. Receiving information from non-personable sources is congruent with the theory teacher-practitioners lacking confidence in instructional practice seek sources not considered personable (Denton et al., 2003). In 1999, Burns et al. identified teacher prepared books and materials, teacher pre-service, reflection of practice, and reading literature methods as non-personable sources of reading instruction

information teacher-practitioners utilized; however, with the Internet becoming a stable, alternative force of often free information placed by districts in classrooms, teacher-practitioners have become accustomed to the availability of information as it is needed without fear of retribution.

Null-hypothesis Exploration

Peer teachers as a source of reading instruction. The findings of this study failed to reject the null hypothesis of the factorial MANOVA and reported no significant difference in peer teachers as a source of reading instruction information for teacher-practitioners within the measures of years of experience and grade level designations or on the main effects of either *years* or *grade levels*. The National Institute for Literacy (2005) states teacher-practitioners should collaborate with peer teachers in an effort to challenge and debate what classroom procedures are effective, or not. Questionnaire comments and interview responses were mixed in support for peer teachers as a source for reading instruction. Statements supporting peer teachers as a perceived reliable source included, “Anytime one of us finds something new or different that is successful, we share it with our peers”, “When teachers can plan and discuss ideas on how to teach specific ideas or objectives, everyone benefits. If a teacher is having trouble with a concept, others may have a different way to present the concept”, and “Our looping teachers plan together.” Questionnaire comments and interview responses ambivalent or non-supportive of peer teachers as perceived reliable sources of reading instruction included, “We do not use peer teachers”, “Peer teachers are excellent sources if they are qualified and passionate about their job”, and “I rely on state curriculum for objectives.”

According to research-educators, in order for success to be achieved with peer coaching certain criteria applies. All teacher-practitioners participating have to be *willing* participants (Robbins, 1991; Showers, 1996; Swafford, 1998). Terminology has to be congruent regarding an exchange of ideas (Rodgers, 2002). The school climate has to be supportive of cyclic investigation by establishing collaborative sessions, a trusting climate, and reflection as required processes (Showers, 1996). The findings in the responses of the interviews in the qualitative phase of this study supports the quantitative outcome revealing peer teachers are not considered significantly different from professional development and school administrators in perceived reliability as sources of reading instruction information. Question 10 (Table 1) asks, “Do you have weekly grade-level meetings to discuss reading instruction?” Of the sixteen teacher-practitioners interviewed, thirteen of the three responded, “Yes”, indicating weekly grade-level meetings were scheduled. In contrast to the responses of Question 10, Question 5 asked, “How do you learn about updates and legislative changes regarding reading instruction” revealing of the thirteen participating in weekly teacher meetings only one received updates and changes regarding reading instruction information. The other sixteen interview responders indicated technological devices (e.g., e-mails, Internet, district newsletter via e-mail, and professional online associations) in acquiring reading instruction information.

Professional Development as a Source of Reading Instruction. The findings of this study failed to reject the null hypothesis of the factorial MANOVA and reported no significant difference in professional development as a source of

reading instruction information for teacher-practitioners within the measures of years of experience and grade level designations or on the main effects of either *years* or *grade levels*. Questionnaire comments and interview responses revealed mix support for professional development as a perceived reliable source of reading instruction information. Comments suggesting support in the concept professional development is perceived reliable for reading instruction included, “Professional development is a great source, but we need more professional development opportunities”, “We have had wonderful opportunities; especially within the past three years for reading instruction ideas”, and “Anytime we ask for a specific need to be met by professional development, it is.” Comments suggesting ambivalence or non-support of professional development as a perceived reliable source of reading instruction information included, “We do not get to go to professional development anymore. Occasionally, they provide staff development days when the district brings in someone. Usually, it is not something I find beneficial for my classroom”, “Professional development rarely focuses on reading”, and “I can’t afford to pay for workshops and school districts no longer pay. Few professional development opportunities within the district.”

The three main types of professional development (i.e., externally drive, collaborative, and teacher initiated) rarely addresses the needs of all teachers (Cole, 1991). This theory is supported in the quantitative findings of professional development not significantly different from peer teachers and school administrators in disseminating perceived reliable reading instruction information. The qualitative findings of questionnaire comments and interviews elaborate this theory through comments. A comment written by a teacher-practitioner with 19 +

years of experience stated, “Most of our professional development does not focus on specific teaching methods or actual things we can apply in the classroom. If they did address our grade level and cover specific ideas or methods, it would be valuable.” Another response from a teacher practitioner with 19 + years of experience indicating professional development is not a perceived reliable source of reading instruction information stated, “The presenter or materials does not always apply to our grade level.” A third comment stated, “Professional development rarely focuses on reading.” Externally driven professional development is developed through the use of questionnaires; however, forces outside the school ethos have not been effective in improving teacher-practitioner implementation of practice failing to provide lasting affects (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2001; Miller & Lord, 1993). Professional development has not been successful in changing teacher-practitioner practice; however, professional development has in the past been the most selected medium for disseminating instructional information to teachers (Anderson, et al.,1994). Teacher-practitioner responses indicated the trend of recognizing professional development in its present form as an ineffective source of reading instruction information as evidenced by the fact some districts within the state of study no longer offer financial support of professional development. Teacher-practitioners of 0 – 8 years of experience indicated through questionnaire comments, “…we need more professional development opportunities”, and “We don’t have professional development anymore.” According to questionnaire comments, teacher-practitioners with 9 – 18 years of experience suggested the tendency to retrieve information typically disseminated

through professional development from district is provided through state frameworks.

School Administrators as a Source of Reading Instruction. The findings of this study failed to reject the null hypothesis of the factorial MANOVA and reported no significant difference in school administrators as a source of reading instruction information for teacher-practitioners within the measures of years of experience and grade level designations or on the main effects of either *years* or *grade levels*. Administrators are considered the instructional leaders in the school climate and are necessary for effective reading instruction implementation (Wepner, Feely, & Strickland, 1995). Questionnaire comments and interview responses indicated mix support for school administrators as a reliable source of reading instruction information. Comments suggesting support of administrators as a perceived reliable source of reading instruction information included, “They get information and give it to us”, “If our school administrators don’t readily know, they find out and get back to us in a timely manner”, and “Administrators advise us to use curriculum frameworks.” Comments suggesting ambivalence or non-support in school administrators as perceived reliable sources of reading instruction information included, “Do not go to them because they have so much to do”, and “If they have current classroom experience”…they are reliable for new ideas, and “Teacher assessments are required by administrators.” This last comment regarding teacher assessments was in response to the question if school administrators are perceived reliable sources on how to assess students. The teacher-practitioner had correlated student success to information provided through administrator *snapshot-observances* of instructional practice.

The position of administrators within the school ethos is capable of providing articles, conference opportunities, and research findings in an effort to assist teacher-practitioners with instructional needs (Smith & Piele, 1997). The lack of experiential knowledge, however, prevents administrators to identify, classify, and recommend practices needed within instructional circumstances (Gorton & Schneider, 1991). The theory of perceived lack of experiential knowledge and perceived reliable sources is indicated through teacher-practitioner questionnaire comments. One teacher-practitioner with 0 – 8 years of experience was inclined to support the administrator as a perceived reliable source stating, “They get information and give it to us”. The majority of the questionnaire comments stated information that could be obtained through the school administrator was available through other sources (e.g., curriculum guide, district-level newsletters, benchmarks, and frameworks).

Further Directions

In order to ensure research replication and implemented progress of the findings for this study, recommendations are suggested for policy, practice, and future research regarding available sources of reading instruction information in an effort to facilitate when change is needed, or warranted.

Policy and Practice

School districts. This study revealed through questionnaire comments and interview responses school districts have different visions on how to disseminate reading instruction information. All districts involved in this study offer varied degrees of similar opportunities for teacher-practitioners with peer consultation, professional development (or conferences), the Internet, and school

administrative direction; however, teacher-practitioners are not reporting a difference in the perceived reliability of peers, professional development, or school administrators. Teacher-practitioners at the probationary stage and teacher-practitioners approaching the retiring stage of the teaching-career spectrum agree in a common belief: The Internet is a perceived reliable source of reading instruction information. Although teacher-practitioners with 19 + years of experience perceive the reliability more than 0 – 8 years, there is no perceived difference in the Internet with teacher-practitioners with 9 – 18 years of experience. The findings produced in the outcome of this study suggests districts may want to consider using district e-mails for disseminating reading instruction information through (a) directing teacher-practitioners to reliable websites regarding reading instruction and instructional technique, (b) updates and changes in legislative changes (i.e., local, state, and federal), and (c) how teachers can use technology in the classroom regarding reading instruction. All of the teachers in the interview phase throughout various regions of the state reported having access to the Internet in the classroom; supporting the Internet as a more accessible source than peers, professional development, and school administrators.

Teacher preparation programs. Universities offering degrees in education may want to consider adding components of effective Internet usage in teacher-education courses. Teacher-education programs often cite useful link pages for teacher candidates to use in the elementary classroom; however, these sites are often activity focused, not continuing education focused. Preparing the teacher-candidate to use the Internet for continuing self-education

for updates and changes in legislation, instructional concerns for reading instruction, and *how to* websites directs energy into focused channels limiting excess waste of time and preventing inundating, superfluous information often shrouding the finer points regarding the instructional topic of interest.

Future Research Considerations.

Contacting participants: district superintendents. Superintendents for all districts within the state involved in the study were contacted through e-mail (Appendix D). Initially, the e-mail offering the opportunity to participate in the study was sent using all addresses viewable. After superintendents interested in the study returned contact, a follow-up e-mail was sent to individual superintendents in an effort to not divulge which superintendents had responded. Telephone contact after the e-mail was a strategy used with the principals eliciting a 100% positive response rate. Principals were inclined to allow the questionnaire to be sent to the schools after personal contact through telephone contact. The finding principals were receptive to the study after receiving a personal invitation through phone calls suggests superintendents may be more inclined to participate if contacted personally through telephone communication following an introductory e-mail.

Questionnaire coversheet. Initially, the first mail-out did not contain a coversheet because the state department had not sent teacher and school names to the researcher by May; however, a coversheet accompanied the second mail-out in September. There was a difference in the quantity of returned questionnaires of May (37%) compared to September (63%). Additionally, the amount of detail included in comments was significant: more comments and

greater detail in the questionnaire with teacher-practitioners receiving the questionnaire with the coversheet. The coversheet included the teacher's name, school name, school address, directions to completing the questionnaire, date of return, and researcher's name, e-mail, and telephone number with directions to contact the researcher if results have been received by spring 2010. The possibility exists a trust between participant and researcher was built with personal information exchanged, and a guarantee the researcher could be contacted.

Distribution of questionnaires. Outliers were evident in the study: MANOVA is sensitive to outliers. Participants complete questionnaires under the influence of the school ethos over which the researcher has no control. Directions were sent with the questionnaires to principals on best approaches for voluntary participation (Appendix B). Teacher-practitioners were to be offered the questionnaire on a voluntary basis; however, if principals embraced a *recruit* versus *volunteer* stance, participants may have exhibited a *screw you effect* as described by Orne (1962). The questionnaire involved in the study was an opportunity to discuss issues involved in sources for reading instruction; however, if teacher-practitioners felt pressured to complete the questionnaire and supply information to an unknown source, the results could be significantly skewed. Possible alternatives to distributing the questionnaire exist. The researcher could offer the questionnaires directly to teacher-practitioners resolving trust issues within the school environment and issues of recruitment.

Statistical analyses. A 3 X 3 Factorial MANOVA analyzed if there was a difference in perceived reliable sources of teacher practitioners. Sample size

and homogeneity of variance are factors considered in order to fulfill the requirements needed for a robust MANOVA. A minimum sample size of 270 was needed: 309 teacher-practitioners' questionnaires were accepted. The Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices reported covariance matrices regarding the dependent variables unequal across groups. When this is reported, variance across groups is not stable; however, cells sizes were comparable. This process included the researcher adjusting sample size to include a difference of 1.5% between the lowest number and highest number cell size as suggested in Hair et al. (1998). This process complies in stabilizing MANOVA and is reasonably robust to the violation of homogeneity of variance when using the adjusted 1.5% difference between lowest and highest cell sizes. An additional alternative would be to restrict all cell sizes to the same quantity; thereby, losing participants included in the total sample size needed. The lowest cell consisted of 28 participants: Reducing all cells to 28 would have resulted in lower power from a total sample size of 252 participants. In order to prevent a violation of homogeneity of variance indicated through The Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices, a greater sample size would be needed in order to ensure at least 30 participants were assigned within each cell (Hair et al., 1998).

Interviews. Teacher-practitioners interviewed were randomly selected through the list of schools agreeing to participate in the study. Typically, the interviews were allocated 15 minutes as not to interfere with teacher-practitioners' planning times; however, once engrossed in the interviews, the researcher and teacher-practitioners exceeded the original 15 minute allocated time limit. Teacher-practitioners, once motivated and involved in the

discussion, were interested in discussing multiple issues involved in the career of education. Two issues not included in this study teacher-practitioners' were interested in discussing was (a) the concern over the possible dissolution of National Board Certification and the loss of payment for this certification, and (b) the constant change in instructional programs required for reading instruction. Teacher-practitioners discussed concerns regarding agreeing to adherence of acquiring National Board Certification; however, the program's dissolution is currently being considered. Teacher-practitioners completing required components to achieve this certification believe the increased pay will be discontinued. Teacher-practitioners felt a lack of adequate information and input regarding the issue of discontinued National Board Certification. Another issue in which teacher-practitioners voiced concern was the almost yearly change in reading instruction programs offered through professional advisement from either grants or through university settings. Teacher-practitioners felt inundated with the amount of information each new program entailed as well as the lack of input in the programs.

Research Continuation

Although the research question revealed a difference in perceived reliable reading instruction information within the measures of years of experience, further investigations are warranted in unveiling further detail of the quantitative and qualitative outcomes. The quantitative outcome of this study reported a difference between teacher-practitioners of 0 – 8 years of experience and 19 + years of experience regarding the perceived reliability of the Internet for reading instruction information: Teacher-practitioners with 19 + years of experience

perceive the reliability of the Internet greater for reading instruction information than teacher-practitioners of 0 – 8 years of experience. Several questions emerge from the quantitative and qualitative findings. This study revealed teacher-practitioners investigate reading instruction information on the Internet. In the study by Small et al., (1998) instructional needs were the topic of interest teacher-practitioners investigated on the Internet. What specific type of reading instruction information are teacher-practitioners with 19 + years of experience investigating on the Internet that is different than teacher-practitioners with 0 – 8 years of experience? What are the contributing factors as to why teacher-practitioners with 0 – 8 years of experience perceive the Internet less reliable than teachers with more experience? What factors are presently contributing to the Internet as the more perceived reliable source of information when compared to other available, personable sources of information? Why are teacher-practitioners at the beginning and ending years of experience more affected by the Internet than teacher-practitioners in the middle stage (i.e., 9 – 18 years)? Further research is needed to assist in explaining the outcome of this study in collaboration with questions emerging from this investigation regarding aspects of the Internet as a perceived reliable source of reading instruction information.

Discussion

Teachers modify instructional practices to assimilate and accommodate existing learner theories (Chall, 1996; Coburn & Talbert, 2006; Denton et al., 2003; Olson, 1981; Small et al., 1998). This study supports this theory in that teacher-practitioners are searching available sources (e.g., the Internet,

frameworks, on-line conferences) for instructional classroom needs. Teacher-practitioners are unlikely to deviate current instructional practice strictly from forces outside of the school ethos (Morimoto, 1973). The influx of Internet offering instructional information has assisted teacher-practitioners in procuring knowledge as it is needed.

Reliability of information is another consideration in deciding to invest time in locating and investigation instructional information retrieved from the Internet abyss. Regardless of the source of reading instruction information, teacher-practitioners should be cautioned in perceived *answers* derived from research in education: plausibility are only possibilities. The teacher-practitioner is ultimately responsible for deciding if outcomes of research from other classrooms are comparable in order to produce similar, effective instruction (Anderson et al., 1994; Chall, 1996; Denton et al., 2003; Ruddell, Ruddell, & Singer, 1994). The National Institute for (2005) Literacy advises teacher-practitioners to evaluate reliability and relevancy of accessed or presented research if (a) the information was peer-reviewed, and (b) whether the study is supported by replication of outcome. Information regarding comparability of classroom factors can assist teachers in deciding if information retrieved on the Internet is worth the time.

Teacher-practitioners acquiring instructional information through self-knowledge devices (e.g., the Internet) possess characteristics of individuals who are exhibiting creative, motivational, inspirational, and effective communicators regarding personality (United States Department of Labor, 2004). Teachers often experience on-the-job stress; and, self-knowledge devices assist

teacher-practitioners in managing distress. Technology is one avenue assisting with self-knowledge devices empowering the teacher-practitioner in knowledgeable inquiry. The Internet is a technological device incorporating components designed to assist the teacher-practitioner in self-knowledge inquiry ultimately decreasing the possibility of on-the-job distress.

What does the quantitative outcome reveal in teacher-practitioners lack of perceived difference in the reliability of reading instruction information among peer teachers, professional development, and school administrators as opposed to the Internet? All of the sources involved in this study are not only readily available to the teacher-practitioner, but also are not without limitations. Teacher-practitioners are less likely to divulge instructional needs and concerns to sources that could impact job security. School administrators possess the potential to assist with instructional growth or to initiate due process of the teacher-practitioner (Ballentine, 1993). Teacher-practitioners are often unsure in determining if an administrator is extending *help* or attempting *harm*. Distrust between school administrators and teacher-practitioners is often catalyzed in a climate failing to recognize the teacher as collaborator (Kushman, 1992). When teacher-practitioners are encouraged through recognition, recommendation, and acknowledgment a practice or procedure is effective by school administrators, the possibility of the implementation of the practice or procedure increases (Kliner et al., 1999). The questionnaire comments by participants wanting to share issues suggest information provided by school administrators is equivalent to frameworks, curriculum guides, and benchmarks: text materials providing instructional objectives. One teacher-practitioner in this study commented on the

questionnaire school administrators assist teacher-practitioners by providing information through required teacher assessments and evaluations. Although teacher assessments are considered an observance of instructional practice and belief possessing the potential to produce student achievement, the concern for teacher-practitioners in the discussion of instructional growth is often one-way, not collaborative. If teachers have concerns with the outcome of an assessment or evaluation, information on how to improve instruction is often pursued through alternate, non-personable routes.

Professional development has often been the venue in order to apprise teacher-practitioners of updates, changes, and new ideas regarding reading instruction information. Failure of professional development to produce implementation of instruction has presented the opportunity to evolve, or demise. In this study, teacher-practitioners commented that professional development is no longer offered in certain districts; and, professional development offered in districts fails to address methods and instructional needs for implementation. Teacher-practitioners also reported that some districts do not pay for workshops, and professional opportunities are rare. Although the comments were mixed in support for professional development, comments stated more opportunities were needed while others stated the failure of professional development to address instructional needs to be implemented in the classroom. Another possible limiting factor of professional development regarding instructional information is the learning style presentation format. Unfortunately, professional development often fails to acknowledge and provide instructional information through an adult learning style in an effort to bridge

belief-to-implementation (Feist, 2003).

The National Institute for Literacy (2005) supports collaboration of teacher-practitioners and their peers. Success of collaboration between peer teachers is often the result of (a) willing participants, (b) acceptance of congruent terminology, (c) a trusting climate, and (d) collaborative sessions (Robbins, 1991; Rodgers, 2002; Showers, 1996; Swafford, 1998). The comments produced in this study suggest a mixed support of the effectiveness of peer teachers. An understanding of the terminology associated with *peer teacher* appeared to be confusing to three teacher-practitioners commenting on the questionnaire. One teacher-practitioner stating, “I’ve never had a peer teacher” responded *never* to the five vignettes regarding peer teachers. Additionally, teacher-practitioners stated, “I have not used peer teachers”, and “We do not use peer teachers.” These statements suggest the school climate factors needed for successful collaboration are either not recognized, or possibly the terminology of *peer teacher* is confusing. Some of the comments suggest peer teachers are valued components of the cyclical, instructional process. Questionnaire comments provided by teacher-practitioners reveal a positive component to school climates supporting peer collaboration. Teacher-practitioners stated, “When teachers can plan and discuss ideas on how to teach specific ideas or objectives, everyone benefits” and “Anytime one of us finds something new or different that is successful, we share it with our peers.” These statements reveal a climate of established collaboration and trust among teacher-practitioners in which peer collaboration is recognized, supported, and valued in the school ethos.

The universal and central components in defining *reading* are encompassed in all instructional topics: Understanding the dynamics of reading instruction is significant to the success of content comprised in other subjects. Teacher-practitioners, regardless of grade designation or content domain, encounter issues regarding instruction in reading (e.g., decoding key words, identifying main concepts and details, inferring cause and effect) requiring familiarity with the process of reading instruction. The importance of understanding skills and strategies of instructional knowledge regarding reading instruction are subject to student diversity and teacher perceived effectiveness. Variables encountered beyond the teacher-practitioner's control (e.g., varied student needs, school climate, revolving educational legislation) supports the need to acquire updated, relevant information. In order to pursue information for reading instruction, teacher-practitioners have a need for a climate of trust. A central component of the creation of a trusting school ethos is the school administrator. Although mix support was indicated in questionnaire comments and interview responses, the outcome data for the section for school administrators contained the greatest number of outliers; specifically, vignettes 15 and 18. Vignette 15 stated on the modified questionnaire, "School administrators are a reliable source for suggesting how to plan for reading instruction." Item 15 reported seven outliers. Vignette 18 stated on the modified questionnaire, "School administrators are a reliable source of information regarding new, or different, ideas for how to teach reading." Item 18, also, reported seven outliers. For items 15 and 18, four participants case numbers were the same: Possibilities exist participants may have circled the same

answer (e.g., all 19 responses were *always*) for all items on the questionnaire; however, the section on administrators received extreme answers beyond the norms for the source, and participant case numbers located in items 15 and 18 did not repeat for other sources. School administrators have the opportunity to convey and support a school ethos reflective of cyclic informational pursuits: not only as a source of disseminating information, but also verbal and visual support (e.g., recognition of teacher-practitioner pursuits, collaboration and exchange of investigational findings, posting progress and findings of school-based investigational pursuits). As the instructional leader of the school environment, administrators are presently perceived by teacher-practitioners as a cautionary tale. Two of the most important roles of the school administrator are to protect the physical safety and mental-growth interest in the outcome of student achievement. These responsibilities require the administrator to assist teacher-practitioners qualified to occupy the position hired while protecting students' abilities to acquire stipulated objectives in the least restrictive, most effective instructional environment available. This oxymoronic effect of the duality involved in the role of school administrators can be conflictive to teacher-practitioners in which the necessity to demonstrate instructional effectiveness is in an era of cyclical reform from the influx of relatively new technology for the field of education (i.e., the Internet) in combination with research-based initiatives. School administrators are hired, first and foremost, to protect the interest of student achievement by securing the physical environment, hiring qualified personnel passionate in demonstrating effective instruction, providing for instructional opportunities for teacher-practitioners, and enacting

due process if conditions necessitate.

Summary

Teacher-practitioners are presently the deciding force in the American public school system on the outcome of student achievement through planning, instructing, and assessing the curriculum. The impact on student achievement of effective and ineffective reading techniques is pivotal to whether the public schooling experience has achieved its promise to gatekeepers to provide developmentally appropriate instruction resulting in student success of objectives provided by the curriculum. Through the evolving course of the American public school system, the success or failure of instructional practices has achieved notoriety by reported trial-and-error attempts, investigations provided by scientific research, and *rotating* education legislation. The mountainous possibilities of instructional design provided through the Internet have proceeded in creating a *more-is-less* climate: too much information resulting in confusion producing fewer answers. Teacher-practitioners have instructional needs to advance, or modify, existing knowledge of effective reading practices presented by various classroom factors (e.g., student diversity, confidence received from acquiring self-knowledge, modification or creation of educational law). The sources teacher-practitioners select to assist with acquiring reading instructional needs are often located within the school environment.

Why teacher-practitioners perceive some instructional sources reliable as opposed to others is supported from confounding factors: school climate, established trust, effectiveness of instruction through reflection of student achievement, and accessibility. This study investigated if there is a difference in

perceived reliability of sources for reading instructional information necessary in providing effective instruction in the diverse American public school system. Sources (i.e., peer teachers, professional development, the Internet, and school administrators) were provided to teacher-practitioners through vignettes stated on a researcher-created questionnaire. The independent measures were years of experience (i.e., 0 – 8 , 9 – 18, and 19 +) and grade level designations (Kindergarten - First, Second - Third, and Fourth - Fifth). The findings of this study concluded there was no difference among teacher-practitioners within the measures of years of experience and grade level designations perceived reliability of sources of reading instruction information; however, teachers of 0 – 8 years of experience and 19 + years of experience perceived the Internet reliable for reading instruction. Although both years of experience groupings (i.e., 0 – 8 and 19 +) perceive the Internet reliable, this study's findings reported teacher-practitioners with19 + years of experience perceive the Internet as more reliable than teacher-practitioners with 0 – 8 years of experience. No difference was reported for teacher-practitioners with 9 – 18 years of experience regarding the Internet. The qualitative findings of this study suggest support of the Internet for perceived reliable information as indicated in the outcome by questionnaire comments and interview responses. Teacher-practitioners in the groups of 0 – 8 years of experience and 19 + years of experience provided more questionnaire comments regarding the Internet than teacher-practitioners of 9 – 18 years of experience. Interview responses indicated technological devises, including the Internet as a pathway to links and e-mails, were identified as the main source of information regarding updates and changes in legislation for reading instruction.

The availability and convenient time-related opportunities the Internet provides to teacher-practitioners for reading instruction information is a practical approach: Teacher-practitioners are often inundated with the pressure of ensuring student success with limited time to investigate options for achievement. The Internet provides the opportunities for teacher-practitioners to investigate as instructional needs become evident.

Presently the confusion with what is acceptable effective instruction through the acknowledgment of research-based instruction is in flux: Teachers are searching for effective instruction. The amount of decisions to be made regarding what is required in preparing and presenting reading instruction is an obstacle to identifying the answer within research findings representing all possibilities (Carroll, 2000). Additionally, the importance of instructional information appears to have a hierarchical influence: Teacher-practitioners base instructional decisions on whether information is relevant and pertinent as indicated by the influence and placement of hierarchy within a system. Unfortunately, local, state, and federal agencies do not express a singular voice conveying type, degree, and importance of instructional concepts (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2001). Although many sources are available when instructional information is needed or wanted, teacher-practitioners discount information if credibility, reliability, and agenda are unclear (Davis, 1999). This study does not suggest teacher-practitioners actively pursue reading instruction information: Only that retrieved Internet information is perceived reliable for teacher-practitioners with 0 – 8 years of experience and 19 + years of experience, and the outcome of the information is anticipated. Regardless of

sources teacher-practitioners elect to use for planning, instructing, and assessing students for reading success, effectiveness of reading instruction should be evaluated by whether it produces children who “read well so that they will love to read” (Gates, 1951, p. 341).

APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPR

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN M

Institutional Review Board

118 Colleg
Hattiesburg
Tel: 601.2
Fax: 601.2
www.usm.

HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTECTION REVIEW COMMIT
NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississip Protection Review Committee in accordance with Federal Drug Adminis (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated be
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions fo data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the priv to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vul
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered reg must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following t be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve mo Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renew

PROTOCOL NUMBER: **29030903**
PROJECT TITLE: **Perceived Reliable Sources of Reading Instructio Selected by Kindergarten, First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth G Practitioners**
PROPOSED PROJECT DATES: **03/01/09 to 12/31/09**
PROJECT TYPE: **Dissertation or Thesis**
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS: **Janet Kimberly Biglane-Hodges**
COLLEGE/DIVISION: **College of Education & Psychology**
DEPARTMENT: **Curriculum, Instruction, & Special Education**
FUNDING AGENCY: **N/A**
HSPRC COMMITTEE ACTION: **Exempt Approval**
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: **03/13/09 to 03/12/10**

Lawrence A. Hosman — 5-24-09

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
HSPRC Chair

Da

APPENDIX B

LETTER INCLUDED IN PACKET TO PRINCIPALS

September 2009

Principal Name
Principal School

Principal Name,

First, I would like to again thank you for the opportunity to send questionnaires to your school: It is important to have as many schools and teachers to participate as data are based on the culmination of many schools' responses. **The questionnaires have a teacher-detachable top sheet containing a label with each teacher's name provided by The (State) Department of Education stapled to each questionnaire.** Each questionnaire can be distributed by placing them in teacher mailboxes, by grade level teams, by professional/staff development, or other effective action used by your school in producing a positive, effective response. If placed in teacher mailboxes, please announce their arrival as this will help in teacher participation. As stated in the e-mail, this study is investigating teacher factors regarding acquisition of literacy instruction: based on demographic information. It is my hope data from the study will assist in multiple factors including, but not limited to, appropriate allocation of funding for materials and sources of literacy and providing teachers with factors associated with literacy acquisition. Information contained in the questionnaire is based on studies of Gorton and Schneider, 1991; Cibulka and Nakayama, 2000; and The United States Department of Labor: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007.

When the questionnaires are complete, or by _____, return all questionnaires in the self-addressed, stamped envelope provided. In addition to the questionnaires, two schools will be randomly selected to participate in an interview phase to add depth to the numerical data: Using a number table, approximately four teachers from two schools will be selected. A copy of the interview questions will be provided in advance. The interviews should take approximately ten minutes of time. The two schools will be randomly selected from the list of participating schools. Further details can be found on the included protocol sheet.

Re-mailings can be expensive, so please encourage teachers to complete the questionnaires by informing them of their arrival and reminding them of when the completed questionnaire is due on the due date of _____.

If you encounter any problems with the questionnaires, please contact me by phone {(phone number} or e-mail {e-mail address.}

The results of this study will be sent to you after my dissertation committee has approved data results: This should be in the spring of 2010.

Sincerely,

Jan Biglane-Hodges
Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX C

E-MAIL TO PRINCIPALS

Principal Name,

Thank you in advance for reading this request for permission. As a doctoral candidate, I am asking your permission to send questionnaires (one for each teacher in grades K, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades) to be placed in your school office for teachers to complete on a voluntary basis before they leave for summer break. The possible benefits for you from this study produced by the statewide, culminated data are:

1. Identifying teacher factors regarding selection of literacy instruction information;
2. Informing teachers of factors associated with collecting literacy instruction information;
3. Assisting administrators at the local level regarding the selection of effective professional development, conferences, guest speakers, and use of teacher workdays;
4. Assisting administrators at the local level regarding the issue of time to disseminate effective literacy instruction information to teachers; and
5. Assisting administrators at the local level regarding budgeting for the dissemination of effective literacy instruction information.

The twenty-item questionnaire investigates factors regarding reading instruction and is being offered initially at the end of the year when teachers are more likely to reflect on effectiveness. The one packet of questionnaires will have a self-addressed stamped envelope for ease of return. There is no personal or school identifying information to be provided on the questionnaires, and all names (teachers', schools', principals', superintendents') will be considered and treated anonymous. The questionnaire should take teachers approximately **ten minutes** to complete. Additionally, if your school participates by completing the questionnaires, you will receive the results of the study. **There is no charge associated with this study for you: questionnaires, postage, and results are free to you with participation as part of my doctoral degree requirements. With your permission, I could have the questionnaires in your office by the end of this week.**

I would greatly appreciate if you would approve the questionnaires to be mailed to your school by Email reply, **"Yes".** Thank you for considering the opportunity to allow your teachers to complete the questionnaire.

Permission to contact you was approved through The Institutional Review Board of The University of Southern Mississippi, (Name): (State) Superintendent of Education, and District Superintendent.

Sincerely,

Jan Biglane-Hodges, Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX D

E-MAIL TO SUPERINTENDENTS

To the State of (State Name) District Superintendents

RE: Literacy Questionnaire

The attached letter outlines protocol for an investigation in reading instruction through the form of a questionnaire. Additionally, permission to contact principals in your district for the research in the state of (State Name) is requested. After reading the protocol, please send your response via Email through 'reply'. There is no charge to either participate or receive the results of the study. All identifying names (schools', districts', principals', superintendents', and teachers') will be considered and treated as anonymous. Permission to contact you has been approved through (Name), State Superintendent of Education for (State Name) and The Institutional Review Board of The University of Southern Mississippi.

The information yielded could be beneficial to you and principals as you financially and time-manage budgeting issues for the expansion of literacy knowledge for your teachers often obtained through professional development, conferences, guest speakers, and professional workdays. The questionnaire has been piloted and is in the field-test phase. If you have any questions or concern, please use the contact numbers at the bottom of the attached protocol.

In order to expedite this request, a simple answer of either **"Yes"-** you may contact the principals in my district, or **"No"-** you may not contact the principals in my district will be accepted as an Email 'reply' response.

Thank you in advance for the time in reading and responding to this Email.

Sincerely,

JB Hodges

APPENDIX E

SUPERINTENDENT FOLLOW-UP E-MAIL

Reminder of Requesting Principal Permission

Attached you should find the literacy research protocol and original Email requesting permission to contact principals in your district for the literacy instruction information study. As of today, May 6, 2009, I have not received a response from you and wanted to reiterate if you have questions or concerns to contact me at either or (phone number). I am a doctoral candidate working on fulfilling dissertation requirements, and the issue of investigating factors assisting teachers in making instructional decisions is current and focused on assisting our profession in the area of literacy. The questionnaire should take teachers approximately 5-to-15 minutes to complete (e-mail address).

The possible benefits of this study produced by the statewide, culminated data are:

1. Identifying teacher factors regarding selection of literacy instruction information,
2. Informing teachers of factors associated with collecting literacy instruction Information,
3. Assisting administrators at the local and state level in evaluating decisions regarding professional development, conferences, guest speakers, and use of teacher workdays,
4. Assisting administrators at the local and state level regarding the issue of time to disseminate literacy instruction information, and
5. Assisting administrators at the local and state level regarding budgeting for the dissemination of literacy instruction information.

The main concern for this study presently is time. In order to send the questionnaires, principals are to be contacted; and, for me to contact the principals in your district, I need your support through consent. The end of the school year is approaching, and I would greatly appreciate an affirmative response from you for this study: I am sure your schedule is busy. An Email reply of **"Yes"** is all that is required.

Approval to contact you was approved through (Name), (State) Superintendent of Education.

Thank you for taking the time to read this second request and hope to receive a response from you soon.

Sincerely,

JB Hodges

(Note: two attachments)

APPENDIX F

19-ITEM TEACHER-PRACTITIONER QUESTIONNAIRE

Teacher-Practitioner Questionnaire of Reliable Sources for Reading Instruction Information

Directions: Please **circle one** response (**Always, Frequently, Occasionally, Rarely, or Never**) for each of the 19 statements as it relates to you and your present teaching position. Additional space is provided for comments below each statement if you would like to contribute further information. Additional feedback may be provided on the back of the questionnaire. Thank you for your time and participation.

1. Peer teachers are a reliable source for suggesting ideas on how to plan for reading instruction.

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never
Comment:

2. Peer teachers are a reliable source of information in determining instructional procedures to be used for reading instruction.

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never
Comment:

3. Peer teachers are a reliable source of information on how to assess student achievement for reading instruction

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never
Comment:

4. Peer teachers are a reliable source of information regarding new, or different, ideas for how to teach reading.

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never
Comment:

5. Peer teachers are a reliable source of information on what objectives to teach for reading instruction.

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never
Comment:

---

6. Professional development is a reliable source for suggesting ideas on how to plan for reading instruction.

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never
Comment:

7. Professional development is a reliable source of information in determining instructional procedures to be used for reading instruction.

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never

8. Professional development is a reliable source of information on how to assess student achievement for reading instruction

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never

Comment:

9. Professional development is a reliable source of information regarding new, or different, ideas for how to teach reading.

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never

Comment:

10. Professional development is a reliable source of information on what objectives to teach for reading instruction.

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never

Comment:

---

11. The Internet is a reliable source for suggesting ideas on how to plan for reading instruction.

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never

Comment:

12. The Internet is a reliable source of information in determining instructional procedures to be used for reading instruction.

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never

Comment:

13. The Internet is a reliable source of information on how to assess student achievement for reading instruction

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never

Comment:

14. The Internet is a reliable source of information regarding new, or different ideas for how to teach reading.

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never

Comment:

---

15. School administrators are a reliable source for suggesting how to plan for reading instruction.

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never

Comment:

16. School administrators are a reliable source of information in determining instructional procedures to be used for reading instruction.

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never

Comment:

17. School administrators are a reliable source of information on how to assess student achievement for reading instruction

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never
Comment:

18. School administrators are a reliable source of information regarding new, or different, ideas for how to teach reading.

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never
Comment:

19. School administrators are a reliable source of information on what objectives to teach for reading instruction.

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never
Comment:

Demographic Information:

I. Years of classroom teaching experience:

___a. 0 - 3 years
___b. 4 - 8 years
___c. 9 - 12 years
___d. 13 - 18 years
___e. 19+ years

II. Do you have a current Mississippi Teacher's license?

___Yes ___No

III. Present teaching position:

___a. Kindergarten Teacher
___b. First Grade Teacher
___c. Second Grade Teacher
___d. Third Grade Teacher
___e. Fourth Grade Teacher
___f. Fifth Grade Teacher
___g. Other: (Please specify):_____

IV. Highest educational degree obtained

___a. Bachelor
___b. Master's
___c. Specialist's
___d. Doctorate
___e. Other

This project has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which ensures that research topic projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board at (601) 266-6820. Participation in this project is completely voluntary, and participants may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits. Questions should be directed to J. B. Hodges (phone number) or Dr. Dana Thames (phone number).

APPENDIX G

20-ITEM TEACHER-PRACTITIONER QUESTIONNAIRE

Teacher-Practitioner Questionnaire of Reliable Sources for Reading Instruction Information

Directions: Please **circle one** response (**Always, Frequently, Occasionally, Rarely, or Never**) for each of the 20 statements as it relates to you and your present teaching position. Additional space is provided for comments below each statement if you would like to contribute further information. Additional feedback may be provided on the back of the questionnaire.

1. Peer teachers are a reliable source for suggesting ideas on how to plan for reading instruction.

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never
Comment:

2. Peer teachers are a reliable source of information in determining what instructional procedures should be used for reading instruction.

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never
Comment:

3. Peer teachers are a reliable source of information on how to assess student achievement for reading instruction

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never
Comment:

4. Peer teachers are a reliable source of information regarding new, or different, ideas for how to teach reading.

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never
Comment:

5. Peer teachers are a reliable source of information on what objectives to teach for reading instruction.

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never
Comment:

---

6. Professional development is a reliable source for suggesting ideas on how to plan for reading instruction.

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never
Comment:

7. Professional development is a reliable source of information in determining what instructional procedures should be used for reading instruction.

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never

8. Professional development is a reliable source of information on how to assess student achievement for reading instruction

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never

Comment:

9. Professional development is a reliable source of information regarding new, or different, ideas for how to teach reading.

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never

Comment:

10. Professional development is a reliable source of information on what objectives to teach for reading instruction.

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never

Comment:

---

11. The Internet is a reliable source for suggesting ideas on how to plan for reading instruction.

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never

Comment:

12. The Internet is a reliable source of information in determining what instructional procedures should be used for reading instruction.

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never

Comment:

13. The Internet is a reliable source of information on how to assess student achievement for reading instruction

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never

Comment:

14. The Internet is a reliable source of information regarding new, or different, ideas for how to teach reading.

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never

Comment:

15. The Internet is a reliable source of information on what objectives to teach for reading instruction.

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never

Comment:

---

16. School administrators are a reliable source for suggesting how to plan for reading instruction.

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never

Comment:

17. School administrators are a reliable source of information in determining what instructional procedures should be used for reading instruction.

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never
Comment:

18. School administrators are a reliable source of information on how to assess student achievement for reading instruction

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never
Comment:

19. School administrators are a reliable source of information regarding new, or different, ideas for how to teach reading.

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never
Comment:

20. School administrators are a reliable source of information on what objectives to teach for reading instruction.

Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never
Comment:

Demographic Information:

II. Years of classroom teaching experience:

___a. 0 - 3 years
___b. 4 - 8 years
___c. 9 - 12 years
___d. 3 - 18 years
___e. 19+ years

II. Do you have a current Mississippi Teacher's license?

___Yes ___No

III. Present teaching position:

___a. Kindergarten Teacher
___b. First Grade Teacher
___c. Second Grade Teacher
___d. Third Grade Teacher
___e. Fourth Grade Teacher
___f. Fifth Grade Teacher
___g. Other: (Please specify):_____

IV. Highest educational degree obtained

___a. Bachelor
___b. Master's
___c. Specialist's
___d. Doctorate
___ e. Other

APPENDIX H

ATTACHED TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE COVERSHEET

TOP SHEET

DETACH THIS TOP SHEET FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE

ONCE IT IS COMPLETED

TEACHER LABEL
NAME
SCHOOL
ADDRESS

After completing the questionnaire, please detach this top sheet and place the completed questionnaire in the "Questionnaire Return" envelope provided in the school office.

The purpose of the top sheet providing your name or grade is to ensure the grade level of teachers for which this questionnaire was designed has an opportunity to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire should take approximately five minutes or less, and your responses are anonymous. Your completed questionnaire, added to other teachers' questionnaires, are important to a larger understanding of what is needed to provide teachers with accurate and current information in the area of reading instruction. The results of this statewide cumulated questionnaire will be available through your principal's office by the spring of 2010. If you are interested in the results and do not receive them by spring 2010, you may contact me through e-mail: (e-mail address)

Your time and response is greatly appreciated.

Thank you.

J.B. Hodges

APPENDIX I

E-MAIL TO STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

State Superintendent of Education

Name of State Superintendent,

Good Thursday morning. I am a doctoral candidate at The University of Southern Mississippi preparing to fulfill dissertation requirements. Attached is a letter detailing information and requesting permission to conduct literacy research of (state) teachers through questionnaires and interviews. I have investigated the (state) Department of Education's website and feel, based on (state) educational vision, mission and goals, the findings of my literacy research may assist in providing local school districts evaluative information for Reading Sufficiency Plans as well as free information regarding teachers' instructional needs.

Please take a moment to review the attached letter and contact The University of Southern Mississippi's Institutional Review Board, Dr. Dana Thames, or me, Jan Biglane-Hodges, if you feel further information is needed. Consent to conduct research can be provided through return email (e-mail address) provided in the address bar.

I appreciate your time in reading and responding to the proposal.

Sincerely,

Jan Biglane-Hodges

APPENDIX J

STUDY PROTOCOL E-MAIL COVER-LETTER

To the State of (State Name) District Superintendents

RE: Literacy Questionnaire

The attached letter outlines protocol for an investigation in reading instruction through the form of a questionnaire. Additionally, permission to contact principals in your district for the research in the state of (State) is requested. After reading the protocol, please send your response via Email through 'reply'. There is no charge to either participate or receive the results of the study. All identifying names (schools', districts', principals', superintendents', and teachers') will be considered and treated as anonymous. Permission to contact you has been approved through (Name), State Superintendent of Education for (State) and The Institutional Review Board of The University of Southern Mississippi.

The information yielded could be beneficial to you and principals as you financially and time-manage budgeting issues for the expansion of literacy knowledge for your teachers often obtained through professional development, conferences, guest speakers, and professional workdays. The questionnaire has been piloted and is in the field-test phase. If you have any questions or concern, please use the contact numbers at the bottom of the attached protocol.

In order to expedite this request, a simple answer of either **"Yes"-** you may contact the principals in my district, or **"No"-** you may not contact the principals in my district will be accepted as an Email 'reply' response.

Thank you in advance for the time in reading and responding to this Email.

Sincerely,

JB Hodges

APPENDIX K

E-MAIL OF PROTOCOL OF STUDY

September 2009

Protocol of Literacy Instruction Study

As an administrator you understand the importance of how valuable selecting appropriate materials, knowledgeable speakers, topics for conferences, and concise presentations for your teachers are to increasing the likelihood of implementation leading to student achievement. The results of this study will be beneficial to possibly increasing confidence in selecting presentation modes and decreasing exhaustive searches for the best medium to disseminate information for reading instruction to teachers. The two-phase study involves (a) teacher questionnaires, and (b) possible interviews.

With your permission, all certified Kindergarten, First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth grade teachers at your school will be offered a voluntary questionnaire: The instrument should take less than five minutes to complete. After completing and returning the questionnaire on or before _____**,** the data will be culminated and analyzed from all participating schools. Interviews with approximately twenty statewide, random participants will assist in explaining the numerical responses of the study. All identifying names (participants', schools', districts', principals', superintendents', and the state) will be considered and treated as anonymous. If your school is randomly selected for the questionnaire and not the interview phase, you will still receive a summary of the results of the study. There is no financial charge associated with this study for you as it is a part of my doctoral degree requirement.

Permission to contact you has been approved through The Institutional Review Board of The University of Southern Mississippi, The (State) Department of Education, and District Superintendents.

I greatly appreciate the time you have taken to read, respond, and agree to this research request and look forward to sending a summary of results when the study is completed and results approved.

Jan Biglane- Hodges
Doctoral Candidate
(Phone Number)

Dr. Dana Thames
Doctoral Director
(Phone Number)

APPENDIX L

JULY E-MAIL TO SUPERINTENDENTS

July 29, 2009

Superintendent Name,

In May 2009, an invitation was e-mailed to your office regarding participation in a statewide literacy study. I am contacting you based on two outcomes of the invitation. First, a few school districts expressed interest in the study with concern for the amount of time and pressure on teachers at the end of the 2008-2009 school year: (State) test schedule is the end of May. Secondly, a few school districts contacted me during the summer expressing their interest in participating in the study but failed to meet the deadline. This follow-up invitation is e-mailed to you in an effort to include all school districts wanting to participate in the statewide literacy study. A review of the advantages for administrators participating in the statewide literacy study includes, but is not limited to:

(a) quantitative and qualitative research information regarding teacher-preferred mediums of information for reading instruction,

(b) assisting administrators in making informed decisions regarding the most effective methods to disseminate reading instructional information to teachers based on instructional factors,

(c) receiving the results of the study if your district participates, and

(d) the study is free to participation.

According to ethical considerations in the field of research, protocol exists to ensure gate-keeping issues are secured. With your permission for the literacy study, I may contact Kindergarten-Fifth grade level schools in your district for principal approval. If the principal approves, I will mail the questionnaires to each school.

As a doctoral-candidate at The University of Southern Mississippi, I appreciate the time you have taken to read and respond to this e-mail. If I can answer any questions or concerns you may have in assisting you in making a positive response, contact me through 'reply' e-mail or phone (phone number). For deadline purposes, a response would be appreciated by August 7, 2009.

Sincerely,

J. Biglane-Hodges

APPENDIX M

E-MAIL TO NEW PRINCIPALS FOR FALL MAIL-OUTS

September 2009

Principal Name
School Name

First, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to send questionnaires to your school: It is important to have as many schools and teachers to participate as data are based on the culmination of many schools' responses. The first series of mailings in May provided the opportunity for many participants to respond; however, this re-mailing is an effort to ensure all groups are represented. **A top sheet for teachers to detach contains a label with each teacher's name provided by the (State) Department of Education is stapled to the top of each questionnaire.** Each questionnaire can be distributed by placing it in teacher mailboxes, by grade level teams, by professional/staff development, or other effective means used by your school in producing an effective response. If placed in teacher mailboxes, please announce their arrival as this will help in teacher participation. As stated in the Email, this study is investigating teacher factors regarding acquisition of literacy instruction: based on demographic information. It is my hope the data from the study will assist in multiple factors including appropriate allocation of funding for materials and sources for literacy knowledge and providing teachers with factors associated with literacy acquisition. Information contained in the questionnaire is based on studies of Gorton and Schneider, 1991; Cibulka and Nakayama, 2000; and The United States Department of Labor: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007.

When the questionnaires are complete, or by September _____, return all questionnaires in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided. In addition to the questionnaires, two schools will be randomly selected to participate in an interview phase to add depth to the numerical data. Approximately four teachers from only two schools randomly using a number table will be selected for interview. The interviews should only take approximately ten minutes of time. The two schools will be randomly selected from the list of participating schools. Further details can be found on the included protocol sheet.

Re-mailings can be expensive, so please encourage teachers to complete the questionnaires by informing them of their arrival and reminding them of when the completed questionnaire is due on the due date of September _____.

If you encounter any problems with the questionnaires, please contact me by either phone {(phone number} or e-mail {e-mail address.}

The results of this study will be sent to you after my dissertation committee has approved data results: This should be in the spring of 2010.

Sincerely,

Jan Biglane-Hodges
Doctoral Candidate
The University of Southern Mississippi

APPENDIX N

EXPERT CRITIQUE SHEET

(Expert's Name)
Expert Critique
(Place of Employment)
(City, State)

April 8, 2009

Dr. (Name),

Thank you for assisting with the development of the *Teacher-Practitioner Questionnaire of Reliable Sources for Reading Instruction Information*. The purpose of this questionnaire is to investigate which sources of information in-service teachers purposely choose through frequency in order to expand knowledge of literacy methods and procedures. If you would please take approximately 15 minutes of your time and read through the questionnaire with the stipulated thoughts for each question in mind, this would provide me with information needed for multiple avenues for questionnaire clarity. Please provide feedback regarding the questionnaire you feel may benefit a participant, if any is needed. Space is provided on the second page for additional thoughts you may have regarding the questionnaire. When you have completed this form, please forward to the email address, (e-mail address).

Thank you,

Jan Hodges
Doctoral Candidate, CISE
(e-mail address)
(phone number)

Dr. Dana Thames
Professor, CISE
(e-mail address)
(phone number)

1. Do you detect any offensive, bias, discriminatory, or defensive language in any part of the questionnaire?

2. Are the questions clear and free of ambiguity for the population intended?

3. Are the directions clear on how to mark the answers for all sections?

4. Is the appearance of the questionnaire professional and aesthetically pleasing?

5. Please cite any additional concerns below you may have regarding the questionnaire.

Side-note: The University of Southern Mississippi's symbol and logo will accompany the title at the top of the questionnaire.

Thank you, again, for your time and assistance with the development of this questionnaire. This project has been approved by The University of Southern Mississippi's Institutional Review Board.

Jan Hodges

APPENDIX O

E-MAIL TO PRINCIPALS FOR FALL RE-MAILS

September 4, 2009

Principal Name
Elementary School Name

Principal Name,

First, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to send questionnaires to your school: It is important to have administrative support as data from teacher participation are based on the culmination of many schools' responses. Questionnaires received in May indicated a number of certain grade level groupings were underrepresented. **To assist with return rate, the questionnaires have a stapled, teacher-detachable top sheet containing a label with intended grades of participation (Kindergarten, First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth).** Questionnaires can be distributed by placing them in teacher mailboxes, by grade level teams, by professional/staff development, or other effective action used by your school in producing positive, effective responses. If placed in teacher mailboxes, please announce their arrival as this will encourage teacher participation. As stated in the e-mail, this study is investigating teacher factors regarding acquisition of literacy instruction based on demographic information. It is my hope data from this study will assist in gleaning insight to multiple factors: including, but not limited to, appropriate allocation of funding for materials and sources of literacy instruction and providing teachers with factors associated with literacy acquisition. Information contained in the questionnaire is based on studies of Gorton and Schneider (1991), Cibulka and Nakayama (2000), and The United States Department of Labor: Bureau of Labor Statistics (2007).

When completed, or by _____, return **all questionnaires** in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided. In addition to the questionnaires, two schools will be randomly selected to participate in an interview phase to add depth to the numerical data: Using a numbers table, approximately four teachers from two schools will be randomly selected for the fall mailing. Further details are located on the included protocol sheet.

Re-mailings are expensive, so please encourage teachers to complete the questionnaires by informing them of their arrival and reminding them of when the completed, anonymous questionnaire is due: on or before **_____.**

If you encounter any problems or concerns with the questionnaires, please contact me by phone {phone number} or e-mail {e-mail address}. A summary of results will be provided to participating schools after outcome data has been approved by committee: This should be in the spring of 2010.

Sincerely,

Jan Biglane-Hodges
Doctoral Candidate

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